



T H E  
S C H O O L  
F O R  
H U S B A N D S.  
WRITTEN BY A LADY.

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“ check the fashionable Vice of keeping Mistresses, by setting  
“ in the strongest Light many Inconveniencies of which that  
“ Practice is productive.—The Distresses of Dashwood, the  
“ Hero of this Piece, owing to his Connection with a Miss  
“ BELLERS previous to his Marriage, are such as render him  
“ an Object of Pity. The Contrast between the Behaviour of  
“ his Mistress, who causes these Distresses, and that of his  
“ Wife, who aims only at removing them, affords an excellent  
“ Lesson in favour of Conjugal Engagements.”

CRITICAL REVIEW, January 1773.





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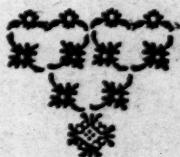




*B* T H E *Padlock*  
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F O R  
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WRITTEN BY A LADY.  
IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



D U B L I N :

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M.DCC.LXXVI.

THE  
SCHOOL  
FOR  
HUSBANDS

WRITTEN BY A LADY  
IN TWO VOLUMES  
VOL. I

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and 'The School for Husbands',  
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T H E  
S C H O O L  
F O R  
H U S B A N D S.  
L E T T E R I.

The Honourable EDWARD DASHWOOD to  
Sir FRANCIS MOSTYN, Bart.

**I** AM in the greatest agitation, in the greatest hurry of spirits to be conceived, having this moment received a letter from my father, in which he desires me to come down immediately to Budworth-Place, that he may introduce me to Sir Robert Grafton. Sir Robert, it seems, has agreed with my lord to let me chuse either of his daughters. His lordship tells me that as they are both fine women, and have large fortunes, I cannot possibly have any objection to one of them. I have not yet seen them;—they may be very fine women perhaps; but there is, you well know, a considerable obstacle on *my* side; and I may venture to call it an insuperable one, as it cannot, I doubt be got over with honour—I mean with regard to the lady I am to marry. I have refused so often, however, and my finances are in so declining a state, that I fear I must comply.—Could I but persuade



Die to give me up!—And yet, I must own, I know not how to resign her.—What a load of anxiety has that attachment brought upon me!—I have hitherto been rendered, either from *her* attractions, or my own weakness, unable to part with her.—Whenever I drop the slightest hint concerning a separation, she falls into such fits of despair, and bursts into such floods of tears, that my heart, too full of sensibility, is so exquisitely pained, that I cannot see her distress without being melted. On those occasions she absolutely unmans me. Were I conscious of being her first seducer, I should think myself extremely blameable in deserting her; but I was not the first, Mostyn—though I firmly believe that she has been very faithful to me ever since the connexion between us; yet that connexion has proved so extremely expensive to me, that I cannot answer her demands any longer, unless my father increases my allowance; an indulgence he will, I am afraid, never think of, except I marry a woman of fortune; and, indeed, I am not to be told that he can ill afford to make over any part of his estate to me, it being far too small for the support of his title; but small as his estate is, he would, I dare say, put himself to *some* inconvenience, rather than not have me settled advantageously, as he calls it.

Thus you see, Mostyn, how unfortunately I am situated. Call on me to-morrow, if only for half an hour, and give me your advice how to act in an affair which requires, you will, I believe, allow, a great deal of deliberation.



L E T.

## LETTER II.

From the same to the same.

**I** Dispatch this immediately, to prevent your coming to town on my account, as I must leave London directly, in consequence of a second letter from my father, who insists upon my setting out *post*, as he has heard that Sir Robert has received another offer, superior in point of fortune, and as he is willing that I should have my choice. His lordship, indeed tells me, that he shall remain in a neutral state on the occasion; but I think I can see his partiality towards the eldest of the ladies, from what he says about them. He has sent me a pretty copious description of them, which I shall not transcribe. You shall have my opinion of the two sisters when I have seen them: but to what purpose shall I declare my preference, since I have not, unfortunately, a heart for either of them!—I had e'en better take *her*, who has the least merit at once, because I shall feel the less remorse for my hypocrisy.

Die knows nothing about the cause of my journey.—I actually dread to acquaint her with what must, sooner or later, come to her ears.—To be obliged to render *those* unhappy who constitute all our felicity in this world—what a painful task!—Sensibility shudders at the thoughts of it.

## L E T T E R I I I.

From the same to the same.

Budworth Place.

I Have seen the lady pointed out for me, and again I say, "'Tis pity to deceive her."

My father was in such a hurry to present me to Sir Robert, that he would hardly give me time to have my hair dressed, and to change my cloaths, though he might have seen plainly by my lingering, and by the excuses which I made, that I was in no hurry to enter upon the business. However as the business *was to be done*, the sooner, I thought, the better. Yet, believe me, Mostyn, I hung back and felt a tremor from head to foot. I never in my whole life was in so tremulous a condition.

My father told me that I looked like a fool, and asked me if I was afraid of such a fine woman. I was actually ashamed of the part I was going to act; but it is was to no purpose—there was no retreating.—Yet I would have given my life to have been any where but just where I was.

While I was in this perplexed situation Sir Robert appeared, and welcomed me to Grafton-house with a politeness which I had not expected, as I had been told that he was inconceivably haughty.

When the first civilities were exchanged, he asked my Lord if he would give him leave to shew me part of his garden. He then conducted me through a beautiful shrubbery in a serpentine walk, to a rustic temple. As soon as I beheld that structure my eyes



eyes were powerfully attracted ; not so much by the edifice itself, as by two female forms, which a poet would have called the Divinities of the place. They were both, indeed, very lovely women, and most elegantly dressed. I could not help viewing them both with admiration ; and had not my heart been engaged, one of them would certainly have enslaved it. They were sitting near each other : *this* was painting upon taffeta ; *that* had a book in her hand ; while her mandoline leaned against her chair.

They rose at our entrance with glowing complexions, which made them look still more beautiful.

Lucy, the eldest sister is of a graceful height, and finely formed. She has the most inviting hands and arms to be imagined, and there is a something in her air extremely pleasing, but a something not to be expressed. I don't know whether she can be properly called a regular beauty ; but she is beyond all doubt, a very bewitching creature. Her complexion is clear, and animated with the most lively bloom ; her eyes are dark and languishing, and her eye-lashes remarkably long and thick, of the same colour with her hair, which is brown : her mouth is rather too wide ; but her teeth are white and even. To conclude, her nose is strait and of a good size.

I have been very exact, you see in my description ; but I cannot possibly describe the mildness and benignity, nor the becoming modesty, bordering on timidity, most agreeably conspicuous in her speaking features.

Bab the youngest daughter, is a very different character ;—supposing their dispositions to be painted

ed in their faces. She is as tall and as well made as Lucy, but has a fairer and more dazzling complexion. She has the finest blue eyes I ever beheld. Her hair is a light auburn; she has a Grecian nose, and the sweetest little mouth you ever saw. Her teeth also are very beautiful, and she frequently exhibits them to advantage with the archest smiles. Sometimes an alluring softness is diffused over her whole countenance, which would surely captivate any heart totally free from any attachment.

Charming, however, as the Miss Graftons are, and as they are generally allowed to be, they must yield, I think, with regard to *personal* beauty, to my enchanting Die, with her lovely, sparkling, black eyes, and delicately made little ruby mouth, which I now kiss—by the force of fancy.

But to proceed.—When Sir Robert had introduced us to his daughters, and invited us to take some refreshment, the ladies accompanied us, while we strolled about to take views of the pleasantest parts of the garden, as the weather was uncommonly favourable for that purpose. Had I been really a lover, I should have thought myself quite happy at the familiar manner in which we were brought together, and at the opportunities dexterously contrived for me, that I might make my choice without those awkwardnesses with which first interviews are generally attended. And indeed many a man would have been puzzled, confoundedly puzzled, upon a similar occasion; for both the agreeable girls behaved with an easy freedom sufficient to encourage one to believe that neither of them would  
receive

receive my addresses with reluctance. On a farther conversation with them, however, Lucy appeared not to be quite so much at ease as her sister. She blushed and trembled when I approached her, though by accident; and seemed to be delicately fearful of displeasing me, or of not pleasing as much as she wished. Perhaps I fancied she was so, because she most engaged my attention. No—I could not be mistaken. When I chatted most to Bab, a sudden seriousness overspread her gentle countenance; but when I returned to her, joy seemed to flush her delicate cheek, and every feature was expressive of delight.

I presented to her a fine bunch of orange flowers, which I had taken, at Sir Robert's desire from a remarkable fine tree in the green-house as we passed it. As our hands met, *her's* trembled excessively. I was, therefore, insensibly impelled to offer mine to support her, and she accepted of them with a blush, accompanied with a half suppressed sigh. If I marry one of them, Lucy must be the girl; though there is a provoking vivacity in Bab, which would please a thousand men; but I find Miss Bruton sufficiently lively.

When I returned home, my father eagerly asked me how I liked the Miss Graftons, and which of them I liked best.

I would have artfully evaded a direct answer, by declaring in favour of them both; but my evasive reply would not do.

My lord growing peremptory, I named Lucy; and by naming her had, at least, the satisfaction to find my taste approved of by his lordship. And  
now,



now, what is to be done with Die? Can you, or any other man, tell me? I must let her know that our connexion cannot possibly be continued, and yet how I shudder to think of the condition into which my information will throw her. Besides, there is my dear little Edward. Sweet fellow! what has he done to be abandoned, and just when he is of an age to be exquisitely entertaining to his fond father. There is no occasion, you will say to give *him* up; but I know she will never part with her boy, and I cannot live without seeing him. Who will provide for his future subsistence? Who will watch over his tender youth? Who will give him proper instructions and teach him to be a better man than his father? I cannot proceed. I am absolutely undone by having suffered my passions to run away with me. Say any thing, say every thing you can to raise my drooping spirits: I was never *so low* in my life.

#### LETTER IV.

MISS GRAFTON TO MISS BLONDEL.

**I** AM going to keep my word with you, my dear Cecilia, though you have imposed a task upon me, which I should not be able to perform without the greatest difficulty, did I not feel myself powerfully prompted to talk about this amiable man. Oh, Cecilia! what have I not suffered since yesterday! Bab, though not less enchanted with him than I am, is laughing ready to kill herself at my tremors. "Pr'ythee don't be so mad Bab."

She

She *will* interrupt me; yet she is quite as far gone as myself. But you expect me to give you an impartial description of this Mr. Dashwood; I cannot possibly describe him with impartiality, for I am by no means an unprejudiced person. Mr. Dashwood, then is tall, and finely formed; he has an elegance and gracefulness in his manners, which are charming beyond expression. His eyes;—but how shall I——“Be quiet, Bab.”

Miss BARBARA GRAFTON, to Miss BLONDEL.

HIS eyes, child, are two stars, the lustre of which has so dazzled poor Lucy, that she can hardly make use of her own.

Miss GRAFTON, in Continuation.

I have recovered my pen; for Bab will not do justice to my portrait: she is too thoughtless, too giddy.

I have shut her out of my closet.

Where was I? Oh! his eyes.—Well then, his eyes, my dear, are so bright, and yet have such a bewitching softness in them, now and then, as if they wished to make some atonement for the mischief they do, that there is no supporting their glances. Then he has such a mouth, such smiles, and discovers when he opens his lips the finest set of teeth I ever beheld. His nose also is beautiful, and his hair grows in the most elegant manner upon his forehead. But charming as his person is, he is doubly attractive by the winning politeness of his carriage, and the respectful modesty of his address. He has no insolent airs, no self-sufficiency  
appears

appears in his countenance, or behaviour; never man had, surely, less vanity, though never man had more reason to be vain. I trembled, I confess, whenever he came near me, and am at this moment in the utmost inquietude. If he prefers Bab, may they be happy: but if he should chuse me—I dare not expect such felicity. Yet if I may be allowed to form any rational conjectures about his behaviour, if my wishes have not deceived me, he does not behold me with the eyes of indifference; I tremble lest I should be mistaken. But I shall never forget the looks which he sometimes casts on me. However, his complaisance, and the natural sweetness of his disposition, may unite to blind me. I will not even permit myself to hope; nor will I close this till to-morrow. You will say I am too much taken with a man at first sight; but let me intreat you not to reprove me too severely till you have seen him yourself. Besides, had we not heard enough before of the amiable Dashwood.

Miss GRAFTON, in Continuation.

OH, Cecilia! how shall I express my joy! It is unutterable. Happily I am chosen by this dear delightful man.

Lord Budworth this morning acquainted my father with his son's determination in my favour, who begged he might be permitted to endeavour to gain a heart, which he should look upon as the most valuable acquisition in the world. I repeat his lordship's words who delivered them as coming from Mr. Dashwood.

What



What will become of me, if, upon a farther acquaintance, I should not answer his expectations? I am almost deprived of my senses through terror and delight; and shall be hardly able to bear the approaching permitted interview, for fear I should not please as I wish to please.

I can't stay any longer; I must hurry to dress; I will neglect nothing to render myself agreeable to such a man. Bab has just rushed into my room. She says she will conclude my letter. I can't stay to oppose her.

Miss BARBARA, in Continuation.

I have looked over what she has written. She has drawn, 'tis true, a lively picture of Dashwood, but not too flattering a one. He is really an elegant creature; and so will she be when she is dressed, if she ever gets through the business of the toilet; but she is too anxious. I don't believe she will be able to support the expected interview as she ought to do. I know she will look foolish, and then of course, the charming fellow will conclude she is over head and ears in love, and so there will be nothing left for him to say.

I like Dashwood, probably as much as Lucy does; and had he chosen me, though I think myself fortunate in not having been the object of his choice, I should have behaved very much like a simpleton. As no man has hitherto attempted to make me look like a fool, I am willing to keep off the evil day as long as I can. It must indeed, I fear come in the end; but the longer it is postponed, the better I shall be prepared for it. I shall have a fine op-

portunity of seeing how matters of this sort are conducted on both sides.

Lucy has just sent to ask my opinion about some ribbons. She wants to know what colour will suit her best. I have answered her question by another; "Can I see with Mr. Dashwood's eyes, my dear?" She wont be quiet. I am sure if she is so whimsical and irresolute, she will never be dressed. I am obliged to fold this up, and send it away.

## LETTER V.

The Honourable EDWARD DASHWOOD to  
Sir FRANCIS MOSTYN, Bart.

**I** AM now engaged, and must go thro' with it, let what will be the consequence. I am determined to give my destined wife no reason to complain of me, and yet I am not in love neither; but I should be highly to blame to wound her peace; I should be destitute of humanity were I capable of planting a dagger in the gentle tender bosom of a woman who loves me beyond expression. Don't think me vain for saying so. Yet who would not be vain of so fine a creature's love? Had I not long ago been firmly attached to another, I must have thought myself supremely happy with *her*. You look astonished, methinks, and imagine me to be a complete coxcomb. I must, therefore, be more particular lest you should accuse me of being too partial to myself.

I set out in no very good humour for this business, as you may suppose. However, as nothing  
more

was to be neglected on *my* part, from mere respect to the lady, I dressed and went, but just before their hour of dining, in dread of a *tête à tête* beyond all things.

I was received by Sir Robert with still more cordiality than before; by Miss Bab with an agreeable freedom: while Miss Grafton strove to imitate her sister's unconstrained behaviour, but could not—She looked abashed, though pleased;—she endeavoured to express her satisfaction, but was disconcerted.

When dinner and coffee were over, we all went through the winding, shady walk, already mentioned, to the temple in which I found my goddess.

On our entrance Sir Robert and Bab stole away, and left me with the dear girl.—Surely to be introduced with much ceremony to *make love*, according to the common phrase, is to appear in a very awkward light; especially when one does not care three farthings for the woman.—However, I was not altogether in *that* situation: attached as my heart is to another, I could not be blind; I could not be insensible. I saw, I felt, and I pitied Lucy's confusion, which was attended with a blushing timidity that gave her new beauties, and could not fail of charming the most obdurate heart.

I took her hand to lead her to a seat.—The finest hand I ever touched (even Die's, so long, so much admired, is not so beautiful)—but it trembled so exceedingly, that I was obliged to detain it, in hopes of giving her a little more courage.—At first, indeed, I believed that her tremor might have been occasioned by her aversion to me, and there-



fore began to flatter myself that I should not succeed : but considering that there was another sister, and that there was little probability of my being rejected by them both, I could not suppress a sigh, which was returned by the lady.—There was then you know, a necessity for my saying that I hoped the permission with which Sir Robert had honoured me, to endeavour to make my addresses agreeable to her, had not produced the disquiet under which she visibly laboured.—I was going to add, that I would withdraw all my pretensions to her favour, if my apprehensions were well grounded.

Fearfully lifting up her lovely eyes with a bewitching softness in them, and then casting them modestly down again, she said, with a sweet, but tremulous voice, “ My father’s inclination will ever be mine, Mr. Dashwood.”

By confessing, in so pretty a manner, that I was not disagreeable to her, she raised so pleasing a sensation in me, that I could not help passionately kissing her charming hand.

We then entered into conversation with rather less restraint.—She seemed every now and then, to relapse into her former embarrassment ; yet she discovered more strength of understanding, and delicacy of sentiment, than ever I met with in any woman. She also shewed such a deference to what she politely called my superior judgment, while her languishing eyes were full of tenderness, that I could not have mistaken the cause of her particular carriage, had not her blushes, sighs, and various emotions, sufficiently convinced me of my consequence in her eyes.—Her behaviour I confess, flattered my  
vanity

vanity extremely ; yet I hated myself at the same time, because I felt myself unable to be as grateful as I ought to have been. I strove to appear as warm a lover as she, I imagined, wished me to be : and while I ventured to avail myself of the decent freedoms arising from my situation with her, when I pressed her soft white hand in mine, and even touched her rosy lips, which breathed a fragrance beyond description, and which were yielded to me with a most inviting delay, I surely should have sunk dissolved in transports in her arms, had not Die at that intoxicating moment came athwart my imagination.—I discovered so much ardour however—s' death ! who could have been unmoved upon so animating an occasion, with a drop of blood in his veins ?—that the poor dear quivering creature, looked alarmed, though pleased ; even terrified at being *so* pleased with my caresses, and tried to disengage herself from my arms with a glowing timidity, with such a delicate reluctance, that completed her conquest over me.—I *must* admire—I *must* revere her, but I *must* feel for Die.—*This* angel ravishes my senses, while the other charmer possesses my heart.—And yet let me ask myself *one* serious question—Is she not a thousand times more worthy of my heart than Die is, whose life was so irregular before her attachment to *me* ?—But then again, has she not since been honest and faithful, and is she not the mother of my boy ?—Oh :—There—there I feel.—Why then not marry her ?—But can I venture to marry a creature who has prostituted her person to so many ?—Yet—has she not freely prostituted it to *me* ?—True—A woman,

B 3

however,

however, who has once shewed a disregard for her honour, cannot prudently be trusted.—But supposing I could repose a confidence in her—supposing I could depend upon her fidelity—I should be covered with shame—I should be pierced with remorse, and not improbably plunged into distress, by taking so indiscreet, so dangerous a step.—I dare not think of it.

I forgot to tell you *one* thing, which gives me no small pleasure. Lord Charbury has purchased an estate in this part of the country.—He has called on me, and I have introduced him to Sir Robert and the two lovely sisters.

## L E T T E R VI.

Miss GRAFTON to Miss BLONDEL.

**I** Have omitted to gratify your impatience, my dear, merely for want of time.—Mr. Dashwood has been here constantly, and every thing must be postponed for the pleasure of his enchanting company.—But I have not told you in what manner he first addressed me.—In how exquisitely pleasing, in how delicately tender a manner he addressed me.—There is no describing it—there is no doing justice to it.—Nor can I inform you how I behaved myself—silly enough most certainly.—I was transported, ashamed, agitated, and embarrassed to the greatest degree.—He saw my confusion.—It was undoubtedly but too visible—and kindly endeavoured to relieve me, by giving a turn to the conversation: by that turn he also gave me an opportunity



portunity to display the few talents, of which I flatter myself I am mistress.—But how insignificant, how trifling was every thing to *him*! I was indeed, so intoxicated with his behaviour, and so fearful of not deserving, or not keeping possession of the heart I had gained—(at least vanity told me I had gained it) that my senses were all in confusion.

While I was in a very fluttered state, he asked me to accompany my mandoline, which hung up near me, with my voice.

I strove to oblige him, but I strove in vain: I could not express a single note. He was so good as to excuse me: he would not even let me charge myself with an incapacity to entertain him, telling me, with *such* a smile, that I must not by seeking to find faults in myself, attempt impossibilities.—

“I will wait, continued he, till you are more accustomed to the sight of me, more convinced of my regard for you, and more sensible of your own merit.”—

How insinuating, how soothing, how very, very, pleasant is flattery, my dear, especially from those we love!—How my heart hung on his lips, while I read in his eyes—(when I dared to look on him, for their dazzling brightness, and their melting softness, alternately abashed while they charmed me) that he was not displeased with my excessive timidity.—Nay he hid the blushes which glowed in my face while I listened, enraptured, to the praises he lavished on me, in his dear bosom.—  
—What transporting sensations did I then feel?—  
Was I to blame, Cecilia, for being tenderly, though modestly, touched by the melting behaviour of  
so

so charming a man? A man chosen for me by my father, a man to whose merit no father could be blind; with whose loveliness no daughter could be unaffected.

Believe me, my sweet friend, partial as I may be to Mr. Dashwood, I am not the only person who thinks highly of him. My father and my sister—yes, Cecilia, the dear wild Bab—confess that he is extremely attractive. Bab has refused many offers, but she would not, I think, have rejected my amiable, my elegant Dashwood.

Mr. Dashwood has introduced a friend of his, Lord Charbury, who will, I fancy, make Bab amends for her loss; but he must not be compared to my admired lover; though, next to *him*, his lordship is the most agreeable man I ever beheld: tall, well-made, fine hair, eyes, teeth—but I cannot waste my time in describing him now.—I must practise some songs, that I may be ready to entertain Mr. Dashwood when he comes. He is musical, and has a very fine taste: so much the worse for me, as I am almost rendered incapable of performing by my fears: so exceedingly do I tremble, lest I should give disgust, while I mean to give pleasure, to so good a judge. But I will learn, if possible, of him, who excels in every thing, how to charm a heart so very dear to me.

## L E T T E R VII.

The Honourable EDWARD DASHWOOD to Sir  
FRANCIS MOSTYN, Bart.

**M**ATTERS were going on so fast, that I thought it absolutely necessary to inform Die myself, of what she must otherwise have heard, possibly in a manner still less agreeably to her. I therefore sat down to perform the most difficult task I ever undertook. No easy one is it to any man, I presume, to persuade a woman whom he sincerely loves, and by whom he is fondly beloved, to consent to an eternal separation. I actually trembled while I wrote, well knowing that what I wrote would be perused with the greatest disturbance of mind.—I was not mistaken.

I dispatched my letter by Hopkins; ordering him to wait, and bring me back an answer. The poor creature was utterly incapable of returning a line to me. She fell out of one fit into another, and Ellis, her woman, has sent me word that unless I come to town, and endeavour to calm her mind, she cannot answer either for her senses or her life.—You may imagine what an effect this intelligence had on me.—I scarce staid to take a short leave of Lucy, but flew to London, pretending urgent business.

I found my poor Die an object of pity indeed.

The moment I entered her apartment I beheld her reclined on a Sopha, with her fine hair dishevelled, and more like a mad woman than a rational



nal being; and my dear little *innocent* was by her, begging her not to cry.

She rose instantly, and taking the child by the hand, led him to me, while she threw herself at my feet, and with the most moving accents, while tears at the same time streaming from her lovely eyes, intreated me not to think of leaving her, if I had not a mind to destroy *her* and her poor dear boy at once.—“I cannot—will not part with you—continued she—sobbing as if her heart would burst—I was afraid that something fatal to my peace was going forward, by your quitting me so abruptly:—but you shall not quit me alive again, I swear you shall not.”—

I raised her immediately in my arms.—I caught my weeping boy to my bosom, and pressed his dear innocent cheek to mine. I then strove to make use of all my eloquence to reconcile her to a proceeding on my part, which nothing but necessity, cruel necessity, could have driven me to—letting her, by degrees, into the state of my affairs, that she might plainly see how impossible it would be for me to support her any longer without an increase of income, by the acquisition of which I should be enabled to provide, decently at least, if not affluently, for herself and her child.

“And is he not *yours* also, replied she—too well you know he is.—Is he not strikingly like his dear lovely, inconstant father?”

Do not upbraid me, Die, for what I never should have consented to, neither on Miss Grafton’s account, nor on your’s, could I have possibly avoided

avoided it. She is as little deserving to be deceived as you; and yet she is the only deluded person.

Oh! do not pity her, said Die; you speak of her as if you loved her.—“Villain! added she, (rising in a fury) I am sure you do.—But where is she?—I will find her out—I will tear out those eyes that have seduced you.”

“If you will be calm, replied I, interrupting her, you shall have no reason to be jealous: I but if you give way to this impetuosity, I will leave you for ever.”

This speech silenced her for a moment, though it could not compose her agitated mind; for she shook all over, and her fine face was every now and then distorted with the pangs which I most unwillingly had occasioned.—H—ns! what was my situation! *Who* would endure what *I* did at that moment, for the sake of gratifying myself in the arms of a fine woman!—I could, at that instant, have sworn never even to cast a look at a single female.—I would most cordially have renounced the whole sex to have regained the heartfelt satisfaction I enjoyed before I became acquainted with this once lively—now wretched creature.—But as past hours could not be recalled, I was obliged to go on. I, therefore, again intreated her to hear me.—I again told her my reasons for entering into a state, to which *she* alone had given me a disgust; and added that nothing but my inability to secure a maintenance for her had prompted me to listen to such a proposal, insisted upon, however, by my father, who had luckily been ignorant

norant of our attachment, ignorant at least, of its being desirous to us both as ever.

As I was almost necessarily reduced, while I expatiated on this subject, to hint at the great expence which my support of her had occasioned, she burst into a violent shower of tears.—“Had you ever informed me, said she, of your being not in a situation to support me in a way of life to which I have been accustomed, I should have retrenched all superfluities, and practised the strictest œconomy, rather than have driven you to fly to so dreadful a remedy.”—But I knew that all she said about œconomy came only from her lips.—Bred up in the most luxurious style of living, and indulged from her infancy with the gratification of her heart’s every, most fantastic wish, she had not the least idea of frugality; she could never think of denying herself the slightest trifle, which her inclination demanded.—She assured me, however, that she would directly retire to the cheapest lodgings she could meet with, in the obscurest part of the town, if I would only promise to see her as usual.—“This boy, continued she, devouring him with caresses, this darling boy, the exact resemblance of his father, shall share his mother’s penury, to preserve *that* father’s love for her.”

I could not bear to hear her talk thus.—She melted my soul.—I begged her in the most earnest manner to compose herself, as she would absolutely distract me if she remained in so agitated a condition.

“No—no, cried she, *I* am the person to be distracted: *I* who am going to be thrown off by  
the



the man on whom my soul doats : I, who am to lose *him*, whom more than life I love ; and to have the additional mortification to know that he leaves me for another ; a gay, a happy woman : for happy *she* must indeed be who possesses my charming Dashwood.—But she shall never enjoy you long : whether I die or live, I will haunt you both till I make you as wretched as you have made me.”

“Pr’ythee don’t talk so extravagantly, said I ; but consider calmly, that I could not have acted otherwise ; and be assured that I will make the most ample provision for you, and my poor little fellow here.”—Quite rejoiced to see me again, the sweet boy had climbed into my lap, and began to play with me.

After having made numberless efforts to restore my poor Die’s tranquillity, and to bring her to reason, she grew more quiet, but far from being satisfied.—At last, she, by her tears, her terrors, and her endearments, so wrought upon me—what man can steel himself against the woman of his heart ?—that I promised to consent to any thing to pacify her, provided she did not oppose the engagement into which I had entered, and make me appear both a rogue and a fool.

She declared she would not oppose me, upon certain conditions. “You must not think of loving this woman, said she : you cannot indeed be expected to love her, as you only marry her for convenience.”

“You cannot suppose, interrupted I, that she will suspect me of marrying her from mercenary

motives: she will, therefore naturally expect to be treated with the tenderness of a lover.

“ Let her expect what she will—and wish, and long, and doat, as I do:—but I swear if you feel the least tenderness, the slightest inclination for her, you will make me mad, and I will be revenged on you both, though I perish in the attempt.”

I was thus, you see, obliged to subscribe, in appearance, to every thing which her frantic passion prompted her to require of me; and I actually believe that the tempest raised in her soul by this intended change in my situation, will not be soon assuaged.—I tremble for her life—I tremble for the safety of *her* whom I am to marry, as I know her to be vindictive enough to be capable of doing things, the bare thoughts of which would make other women shudder.—And yet how very lovely is she when under the influence only of the tender passion, or when a soft serenity in her face is the agreeable indication of a heart thoroughly at rest. Seldom, however, is that serenity visible: frequently does the smallest trifle disconcert her, and the slightest breath of contradiction blows her into a storm. In such moments of perturbation the finest features nature ever formed become frightful, and the whole woman is an object of horror.—I must, therefore, for my own ease, as well as her's, for the sake of my future wife's tranquillity, and in order to keep up some kind of credit with her and her family, carry matters as fair as I can with Die, who will, I hope, be by degrees brought to her reason, and to resign me.

L E T-

## L E T T E R VIII.

From the same to the same.

Budworth Place.

**I** Have, at last, torn myself from Die, and am here again: but I could not get away till I had almost sworn not to love what is really very desirable.

Miss Grafton, by the eagerness with which she flew to receive me, by the satisfaction which sparkled in her eyes, and by her glowing countenance, sufficiently convinced me that my return gave her the sincerest pleasure.

I made the best excuse I could for my long absence both to her and to her father; but the latter was not so well satisfied as the former.—The dear amiable girl appeared to be too much delighted to have me again, to think of chiding me, would her delicacy have permitted her. 'Tis very fortunate that she is of so mild a disposition; for Die, before she would part with me, made me swear to make a second elopement in a few days, except I chose to see her at Sir Robert's.

After all, Frank, 'tis to be awkwardly circumstanced to see a woman with whom we are only pleasurably connected, want to exert so improper an authority over us.—But, indeed, I was ever of opinion, that a mistress is far less eligible than a wife. Many inconveniences may, perhaps, arise from an indissoluble engagement, but still greater, I am sure, spring from a temporary connexion.



“How came you then so strongly attached to this woman?”

I will tell you: but in order to make you perfectly acquainted with an affair, which certainly requires an elucidation, I must give you a short account of the lady in question.

Miss Bellers is the daughter of a man of some family, but of little or no fortune, who being of too idle a temper to apply himself to any employment, by which he might improve his income, chose rather to make the most of a handsome person among the women, many of whom, when he was at a very early age, distinguished him with the last marks of their favour. Among the variety of his acquaintance he saw at the house of one of them the mother of Diana, who though not so beautiful as several with whom he conversed, was an infinitely more pleasing object in *his* eyes than any woman he had ever beheld. To so great a degree, indeed, did she strike him, that he immediately availed himself of every opportunity to gain her upon his own terms. He was happy enough to find that he was beloved by her; but as she was virtuous, she would listen to no dishonourable proposal. Matrimony was by no means agreeable or convenient to him, as her fortune was very small; yet being earnestly desirous of monopolizing her charms, he was prompted to address her in her own way, and they were married. Luckily for them both an uncle of the lady's dying soon afterwards, and leaving something considerable to her, they lived very genteelly, and educated Diana, their only child, born about a  
year

year after their marriage, in the politest manner; at the same time endeavouring to gratify even her ridiculous wishes, which were not a few, as she was naturally of a whimsical and capricious disposition. Her person was extremely beautiful: she made a quick progress in dancing, music, and drawing. She never could sing, indeed, never having a voice strong enough to enable her to excel; but in conversation her tones were uncommonly sweet. At a very early period in life—a period frequently fatal to girls, she lost her mother: and soon after *her* death, Mr. Bellers, having been restrained from committing several extravagances by the prudence of his wife, for whom he had a great esteem, soon gave a loose to his inclination, soon plunged into all kinds of debaucheries, and soon fell a martyr to them, leaving his daughter under seventeen, with not a single *hundred* towards her subsistence, after his creditors were satisfied. A young and lively creature thus thrown into the world, was certainly in an alarming, in a truly dangerous situation; and her situation had such an effect upon a friend of her late mother, that she took her home by way of a companion; thinking that if she had ever so little discretion, joined to so charming a person, some man of fortune might take a fancy to her. But discretion was never one of *Die's* virtues: all the little prudence which she discovered during her mother's life was entirely lost during her father's, who, after the decease of his wife, was too much taken up with his own amusements, to attend closely to the conduct of his daughter. *Die* was not guilty of any

very considerable misdemeanors, but she was far from being discreet on many occasions. The lady who had generously received her into her house soon perceived her errors, and being a woman of understanding and character, as well as benevolence, set herself to work, in order to produce a reformation. Miss Bellers, however, was too obstinate and perverse to pay any regard to the advice or the reproof of her best, and indeed her only friend. Meeting with lord P—— at her house, she was at first treacherously seduced by him, but afterwards easily prevailed on to live with him in the most unreputable light: though she has since a thousand times declared that she never loved him, but that being forsaken by her benefactress, she had no other asylum to fly to. My lord, not being famous for his constancy, in a little while grew weary of her, and deceived her, according to her own account, into the arms of another man of fashion, who being still less refined in his pleasures, soon left her in distress. She was then solicited by a celebrated *gentlewoman*, who deals very largely in beauty, and agreed, but with the greatest reluctance, to the terms proposed to her, as she was quite at a loss for a subsistence. In this *gentlewoman's* house I first beheld her (for the punishment of my sins, doubtless I beheld her),—I accompanied a gay friend of mine to it one evening, at his earnest request, who having before fixed upon his favourite nymph, Miss Bellers fell to *my* lot; and so artfully did she play her part, so pathetically did she lament, with sighs and tears, her past errors (into which, as  
*she*



*She* related her story, she had been cruelly deluded) that my heart, naturally alive to sorrow, especially in so fair a form, was touched beyond expression at her tale, which was delivered with soothing accents, strongly heightened by the silent eloquence of weeping loveliness. I could not but endeavour to relieve an object appearing to me to be so worthy of relief. I took her immediately from that infamous house, and placed her in private lodgings. By so accommodating her, I at first only, I positively aver, designed to assist her in escaping from so pernicious a dwelling, and to put her into some way of providing for herself, without the corruption of her morals, and the destruction of her peace: but she poured out her gratitude in so moving a manner for what I had already done, that I was quite unmanned by it: I was softened to a degree not to be described, and before I was aware owned a passion which I, however, attempted not to gratify without her entire approbation. Her consent was not long wanting: she soon, indeed, though with floods of tears, confessed that she loved me beyond either life or honour. After such a confession, you may imagine that there was little ceremony on my side, and as little reluctance on her's. 'Tis impossible to tell you how much her society charmed me: I can only say that I was absolutely intoxicated with it: and the affecting distress in which she always appeared whenever there was the most remote hint of a separation, served but to strengthen my attachment to her. I thought I could not do too much towards making her life agreeable to her in every respect.

respect. My purse was ever at her command: and as she was of an exceedingly expensive turn, my fortune was soon very much impaired. So much, indeed, is it impaired, that I am obliged to except of my father's terms. They are, I freely own, terms to which few sons could, with reason, frame any objections; and they are terms to which I should, without the least hesitation, subscribe, did I not *feel* for this poor woman, who must by this procedure of mine, be rendered extremely unhappy. Not that I am in the least weary of Diana, nor yet in love with Lucy. The truth is, I do not approve of so irregular a life: but after what I have told you, you cannot suppose, that had I a sufficiency, I should bring myself to think of marrying Miss Bellers. Admitting the prudence of our union, my boy would not be legitimated by it. Yet, when I look upon that amiable child, when I consider that his mother has been faithful to me, that she still dotes on me—how—how can I drive her from my heart? But I must conclude here. I have already said enough upon a subject, which I wish most sincerely I could for ever forget.

## L E T T E R IX.

From the same to the same.

**W**E are now proceeding with the greatest expedition; settlements are drawing; cloaths making, &c. &c. You will soon see your friend become Benedict the married man. Were this

this Die but once out of my head, I should, I believe, be contented with my lot.

Lucy improves upon me hourly ; as we necessarily grow more familiar, she of course discovers more of her real disposition, which is, indeed, amiable beyond expression. She has also an accomplishment which Die wants ; she sings like an angel. Would I had never seen the wretched Bel- lers : I might then have been happy. You will hardly give credit to me when I tell you what pains I take to forget her ; but all to no purpose, as I receive sheets of paper from her every post, blotted with her tears, and filled with the strongest injunctions not to forget her, nor my promise to her, in the arms of my *bride*. *This word*, however, was not in her letter ; she could not bring herself to write it. But I will I say no more of her—at least, not at present.

We pass our time here chearfully enough ; perpetually shifting the scene by meeting alternately at Grafton house, Budworth Place, and Elm Park, lately purchased by lord Charbury, who is become almost one of our family, and is extremely well received by Sir Robert Grafton, as he has an eye upon him for Miss Bab. I begin to think too that the lady herself is not a little pleased with his person and conversation. Charbury has, you know, a fine open countenance, strongly expressive of the innate goodness of his heart ; a heart replete with those virtues which do most honour to humanity. He is also very graceful in his manners, and modest in his carriage ; so that by his virtue and his

*agreement*



*agremens* together, he has, I actually believe, made himself of no small consequence in Bab's eyes; though she would rather forfeit her life, I suppose, rather than confess so much, as she seems to have a little proud heart, and spirit sufficient to carry her through a love affair with any man. But all this is only conjecture; the worst of the business is, my lord appears to be blind to her charms: not but that he has owned to me that he thinks her exceedingly handsome. He spoke of her, however, with as much *sang-froid* as if she had been his sister. But he is a fellow uncommonly stoical upon these occasions. How infinitely happier is he with his apathy than myself, who with a less share of sensibility might stand a fair chance of being happy; for I dare swear that in Lucy's opinion, there are no shades in my character. Would to heaven that I were as free from failings as the good girl believes me to be. You cannot imagine, Mostyn, what remorse I feel in being obliged to impose upon such an artless, aimable creature: yet I will, by all that's good, I will endeavour so to conduct myself that she shall not have any reason to suspect me: but I have a very difficult game to play: for if she only fancies that I love Lucy she will be the wretchedest woman in the world; and if she discovers any proofs of my affection for her, they will certainly drive her to some desperate action. I have brought myself into such a situation, that I cannot reflect upon it without shuddering. The pity which I feel for these two fine creatures is inexpressible: the one is rendered actually miserable,

rable, the other most probably *will* be so—from my folly. Yet how thoroughly do I despise myself for being so abject a wretch as to tremble at the resentment of a woman, whom, but for my shameful weakness in yielding to the first impulse of an irregular passion, I might have at this time beheld, with the highest satisfaction, the most refined delight—as nothing surely can equal the joy arising from our having relieved the mind oppressed with misery, or saved the guilty from the commission of new crimes. What joy, should I have felt, had I assisted Miss Bellers to quit a life of infamy, instead of making her continue in that life, instead of making her still more infamous, by the indulgence of my criminal inclination for her!—Probably, you will think that I treat this business too seriously: but were it possible for you to examine the heart of many a poor devil, who has, like me, encouraged a woman to prefer a life of infamy to a life of virtue, you would not, I imagine, find it in a much more quiet state than mine is: though I still am thankful to heaven that I was not the first who seduced her from the paths of innocence. The consciousness of having been her first seducer would, I believe, drive me to distraction. But you will say, perhaps, that as I was her first, her only *lover*, I might have acted like a man of honour by marrying her, and by so doing have very soon excluded all reproaching reflections.—True, Frank,—but I am too nice to take up with even my own leavings. I have ever laid it down, as a rule never to be disregarded, that she who will yield to *one* will not be over coy to another, should  
 accident

accident or opportunity prompt her to be kind: and therefore, with this way of thinking, I shall certainly be the last man in the world to marry my own mistress. To a woman who is not dutifully attached to you, who is not interested in your happiness, you will only be a temporary favourite: and when once a woman really thinks that infidelity is no crime, she will undoubtedly act agreeably to her thoughts. I do not in the least impute Die's constancy to me to any penitential reflections on her past conduct, to any virtuous feelings. She is, I believe, only faithful to me, because I happen to be at present her favourite. I shall appear inconsistent by saying so; but I cannot help declaring to you, that tho' I could have been glad to have continued my attachment to her unmolested—I wish, with all my soul, that she would just now take a fancy to some other man. However, as I promised you at the beginning of this letter that I would cease talking of her, I will stop here—while it is in my power.

## LETTER X.

Miss GRAFTON to Miss BLONDEL.

**I**N a very short time now, my dear, your Lucy will be in a very different situation in life; a situation about which, till I became acquainted with Mr Dashwood, I was quite indifferent; but I shall now enter upon it with the most disquieting apprehensions, doubts, and fears, lest I should not always be so agreeable to him as I wish to be. The  
dread



dread of disgusting him on a nearer intimacy, or, at least, of not pleasing him according to my earnest desire, fills me with a thousand anxieties; and I sometimes, indeed, fancy that it would be infinitely more painful for me to part with Mr. Dashwood than for *him* to be separated from me. I have no cause, I own, to complain of him as a lover, but he appears frequently lost in thought, and falls into such reveries, from which he never recovers without the strongest marks of confusion, that I cannot any way account for his abstracted behaviour. It fills me with the softest pity, and forces me to discover more tenderness than may be necessary. Yet will you not permit me to confess, that Mr. Dashwood is become very dear to my fond heart; so dear that I cannot see him labour under the slightest disquiet, without feeling myself ready to offer up my life to remove it: and surely I do not go too far by saying so, for he always receives every proof of my affection in the most endearing manner. I cannot help loving him so sincerely; yet did I imagine that I displeased him by loving him so much, I would try to love him less.

Bab, will you believe it, my dear, is certainly very much taken with lord Charbury, who is, really every way deserving of all that *my* Dashwood has said in his favour; his person and his manners are quite unexceptionable.—I have not a great deal of time, indeed, to mind the affairs of other people, at present; but I cannot help, from my own sensations, becoming a more knowing adept in love affairs every hour; and I think I see nothing of the lover in my lord. He is, however, not-

withstanding this supposed indifference, very much with us, both at home, and in all our parties.—As the friend of Mr. Dashwood, his intimacy increases in our family, and Bab and he are, of course, perpetually together. The little gipsy, I can see, plays off all her charms; but I do not find that they have yet done any execution. Lord Charbury is naturally of a serious turn, though often a very sprightly companion. Bab takes an infinite deal of pains to make him as wild as herself; and he will sometimes, as if merely to divert both her and himself, fall in with her whims; but he seems generally to fall in with them rather through complaisance than inclination. My father is prodigiously fond of him. You know my father's passion for rank, which would, I dare say, setting aside the advantageousness of such a match, make him resolve to fix his lordship for a son-in-law. He therefore, encourages his visits, and enters into all Bab's devices to amuse him, at least to attract his attention.—Sir Robert has also permitted her to give a definitive answer to Sir Richard Nevil, who has been, you know, for some time, her admirer, and who was kept in suspense by my father—(though much against my sister's will, as she always declared she never could like him) till Mr. Dashwood had made his choice. You may, therefore, suppose that my lord will be accepted as soon as he offers himself. Mr. Dashwood thinks, with *me*, that Bab is by no means averse to his friend; and when I told him I wished they might come together, he replied, I am not sure whether my lord does not look upon himself to be in some measure pre-engaged.—

gaged.—The case is this: the late lord Charbury was left guardian to a miss Lewson by her father, who was his particular friend, and who always expressed a desire that she might be, at a proper age, married to his son, provided the young people had no objection to each other; but as Miss Lewson was not marriageable at her father's death, and as the present lord was abroad, a union between them could not at that time be thought of. She was continued at the same school in which her father had placed her, by her guardian, who died before his son's return to England. She was then left to this young gentleman's care. Lord Charbury found among his father's papers a few lines, in which Constantia was strongly recommended to him for a wife, if they liked each other well enough to enter into the married state together; but as my lord has declared that he does not like to take a girl from school to marry her, and as they have no female relations with whom she can be properly trusted, nothing has been determined. I have often heard him say that she is handsome and sensible, and lament his being unable to know what to do with her. I never heard that he was in love with her; but I am inclined to believe that he has rather a desire to act agreeable to his father's inclination.

Thus far Mr. Dashwood.—And now tell me, my friend, if you think there are any hopes for my sister.—You must not, however, mention any thing of what I have written to her, as she would most probably never forgive my seeing—what, with all her heart and address, she has not been able to hide.—I sometimes think that lord Charbury is too



penetrating not to make discoveries of the same kind with mine: yet he does not, by any part of his behaviour, induce me to suppose that he *has* made them.—Mr. Dashwood is just come.—I cannot stay to write any more at present.

## L E T T E R XI.

The Honourable EDWARD DASHWOOD to  
Sir FRANCIS MOSTYN, Bart.

**T**HIS poor wretched woman will not let me enjoy a moment's rest: she *will* make me as unhappy as herself. She had, I told you, written to me several times since I left her. In the last I received, she so strongly claimed my promise to see her once again before the dreadful ceremony was performed, and concluded with so many threats of vengeance, not only against Miss Grafton, but against herself, that I could not withstand the earnest, and indeed alarming summons, especially as she repeatedly assured me, that the sight of me, though for the last time, would make her more calm.

I parted from Lucy, pretending that I was going to accelerate matters towards a day, which I am in no hurry to see. How few men in my situation would talk thus, just on the point of possessing one of the finest women in England; a woman too who loves me, fondly loves me; for when I bade her adieu, her head dropped, and she looked like a blushing rose covered with pearly dew, broke from its stalk.—Believe me, Frank, I kissed away her  
tears,

tears, and almost wished I had not talked of leaving her.—Something of that sort escaped me in my hurry; the gentle girl, fearing, I imagine, that she had offended me, by discovering so much sorrow at my leaving her, raised her charming head again, and with a modest blush begged me to excuse her, if she had too warmly expressed the concern she felt on my approaching departure: “I well knew, Mr. Dashwood, continued the dear creature, that a woman’s affection and fears may be sometimes rather too troublesome; yet I hope I may rationally expect pardon from so amiable a man.”—What an excellent disposition!—How I adore her for it!

“But it would not keep you from Die?”—

True—true, my friend, because compassion led me to her.—Oh, Mostyn! what would I not give to find Die of so heavenly a temper?—And yet I must here contradict myself; for if she was, I must either marry her, or suffer still a thousand times more anguish on her account than I do already.—For surely it must be infinitely more cutting to be pained for an angel than for a fiend; and Die, at present, I think, too much resembles the latter.

I was received with the keenest reproaches and upbraidings, during which she forgot every thing due to her sex and me; and vented such volleys of execrations against the innocent girl, whom I am going to marry, against the joining of our hands, against the nuptial bed, &c. &c. that one would have actually set her down for a lunatic, had she not immediately come to herself upon my treating her with my former endearments. With the ut-

most difficulty I prevailed on her to tell me why she summoned me in such a hurry.—After having fainted away twice or thrice, and as often attempted to destroy herself, she vowed that the day on which I was wedded to Lucy, should be the last of her life, and the most accursed of the year, unless I would take the most solemn oath not to abandon her totally, but to see her frequently, and never to shew any more attention to the girl, whom I was determined to marry, than was absolutely necessary in order to keep fair with the family.

I asked her calmly how she could reasonably expect to share the lady's fortune, when she grudged her a share of my love.

“ Love! replied she—Oh! name it not—the bare idea is not to be borne. You shall not; dare not love her.—Besides, how little does she deserve your love, compared to me! Your connection with her is in consequence of a fordid compact made between two mercenary fathers, by which you acquire a large addition to your fortune, and she gains—H—ns!—a man for whom all the rest of her sex would give up fortune, reputation, health, Life—ever thing most precious to them; while I— but I will not boast of what I have done; I freely, willingly, consented to sit down with loss of character, though it might have been through your generosity retrieved; and would most readily, most chearfully part with *my* life to make your's happy.—As to *my* life, indeed, I shall neither be able nor desirous to preserve it, after being deprived of *you*; yet I confess it will give me a cruel pang in my last moments, to know that *your's* can only be made happy by a union with this—Oh! let me not name her,



her, let me not think of her—this devil, who is to rob me of my dear charming Dashwood, the father of my wretched undone child.”—

Here fits quick succeeded each other. The poor innocent fellow roared and cried that his mother was dead.—She too increased my distress, by telling him, recovering a little, that I would kill her with my cruelty.

The scene that followed would have, I believe, touched the most obdurate heart.—I could not stand it.

The frightened boy, with the most pity-moving looks, turning his eyes first towards his mother, and then towards me, sobbed out, “Dear, dear papa—don’t hurt my poor mama—kill *me* papa—I had rather die than my mama”—clinging about my knees.—I could not stand it—I was melted.

Catching up the dear amiable boy in my arms, and drying his poor wet cheek, I told him I would do every thing in my power to preserve him and his mother too.

Hanging upon my neck, he begged to stay with me.

“Why, my dear Ned, said I, don’t you love your mama best?”

“Yes I do, replied the sweet child; but she frights me so that I had rather live with you.”—

Poor innocent! may I be permitted to say that his choice was most judicious? How I wished to confirm it, and to take him from this furious woman, who will quite spoil his temper, as few children at his age have so much sensibility, or brighter parts.—The more likely, therefore, is he to be spoiled.—But

to

to take him from her now, would be to make her mad indeed, and where to place him I know not. —I, who ought to be his instructor, I, who am his doating father, am ashamed to own him. —How severely, but how justly, am I punished for my folly; never to have it in my power to make my much loved son the inheritor of my name and fortune, but doomed to see him innocently suffering, for ever deprived of his father's protection, and for his father's indiscretion condemned to ignominy. —My heart bleeds for him; for, if I am not mistaken, this dear child is as good as he is unfortunate. —Why then should I afflict myself about him? Will he not with an agreeable temper and an amiable heart be as truly deserving as if he was the lawful heir to the highest title, and to the largest estate in the kingdom? —Is not virtue far beyond birth, and and is not internal merit superior to all outward advantages? Undoubtedly: but when I consider how liable a youth with so tender, so yielding a heart, is to be drawn into the very same errors, the remembrance of which at this moment fill me with contrition and remorse, how can I help feeling a thousand fears for my little Edward? How can I help wishing —though I wish in vain— to have him always under my own eye, that I may continually warn him against those follies which have proved so fatal to me. —But, perhaps, Lucy, by and by, may give me leave to introduce him into the family as a friend's son, or in some other shape. —His mother will undo all again. In such a case he must not be suffered to see her. —And can I tear from her every thing most dear to her, her child? —Heaven forbid that

that I should first teach him to be undutiful to his other parent. Thus, which ever way I turn me, Mostyn, nothing but what is in the highest degree disagreeable presents itself to my imagination.—But to return to Die—would I could forget her!

Snatching the boy from me, upon hearing him breathe his pretty infantine wish to live with me, she roughly shook his tender shoulder, and asked him in an imperious tone, who had taught him to hate his mother.

“Mama!” replied the weeping child, staring up in her face.

Then, turning to me, she said, “And so you want to make me completely miserable, you want to take my child from me.—I see your drift.—But you shall not carry your design into execution.—No, Sir—he is my own; and sooner than I will give him up to *you*, we will both starve together.—No—I will die a thousand deaths before I will part with him, and for this one most unnatural wish of your’s, may your hated marriage-bed be ever childless!—may your cursed wife be barren!—But why do I spend my breath thus, and waste the little strength I have left, added she, softening her voice, in calling down vengeance on *your* head, my Dashwood, when you may yet remember your promise, and then I may pass the remainder of my life—short will the remainder of it be when I am deprived of *you*—in some sort of peace?”

“What promise, said I, glad to see her begin to grow a little more calm, having been cruelly vexed to see my boy so roughly treated, what promise, Die?”

“Why,



“ Why replied the coaxing hussy, coming up to me, and throwing her arms round my neck, while her eyes, her dazzling eyes, looked *such* things Mostyn, you know, my dearest, you are not to love this wife, and then there can be no children, you know, if you are as indifferent as I would have you to be.”

I was afraid to tell her how ridiculous she made herself by that speech, lest I should by so doing occasion her relapsing into her former passion.—Kissing her, therefore, instead of speaking, I endeavoured by my endearments to turn her thoughts into another channel; but it was with the utmost difficulty I succeeded.

When I was on the point of taking my leave of her, she said, with a deep sigh, “ Well, before we meet again, you will be married.—How shall I know the day?—Yet I would be ignorant of it, if possible, for ever.—Don’t mention it—don’t speak to her.—But it cannot be concealed—I shall see it in the papers—I shall see my rival’s detested name joined with that which—I’ll tear it in a thousand pieces, as I would the woman herself, who has made you false to me.—But my dear Dashwood, added she, again softening her voice—my best beloved, charming Dashwood, I would not have you think I can ever, after that odious ceremony is past, look upon you as I have done; and may that which gives you to another be ever as unfortunate to her as it must be to me.”

Thus we parted, and I am to set out to Grafton house in an hour, not to return till I am bound in indissoluble chains. However, were this Die quite  
out

out of the question, I think I might stand a very good chance to be—satisfied, at least.

## L E T T E R XII.

From the same to the same.

Grafton House.

**J**OY to me, Mostyr.—Give me joy. How happy should I be, how highly should I relish the congratulations which have been poured in upon me from all quarters during this last week, were I not apprehensive of having my present domestic felicity cruelly interrupted, if not totally destroyed, by the machinations of a woman raging with the pangs of jealousy, and breathing nothing but revenge. My Lucy is, indeed, every thing that I can wish her to be.—Oh! Frank, how clearly do I now see the difference between a mistress and a wife.—Would I had never known the former.—Yet I must pity—I must feel for her; but I would—forget her, at present at least, when every object around me here wears a smiling face, and when my wife appears in the most pleasing light.—She seems to be the happiest of human creatures.—I thank heaven that she is contented with me.—I am sure I am far from being contented with myself, and fear I never shall be. We are strongly pressed by Sir Robert to remain with him for some time. But who do you think Bab has got for a companion to supply the place of her sister? Only Miss Lewson. Bab has somehow managed matters with so much dexterity, that

that while I and Lucy were engaged together, she prevailed on lord Charbury to open his heart to her about this fine girl, who is really too old to be at a boarding-school. His lordship having expressed his embarrassment about her, Bab very generously invited her to come and live with her. My lord jumped at the proposal, and brought her hither before our marriage, because she had never been at a wedding.

Constantia Lewson is a very fine girl; her person is blooming and attractive; her manners are amiable, and not the less so for the timidity with which they are accompanied. In short, she looks as if she would be a formidable rival to my arch sister, who treats her, however, to all appearance, with great affection and esteem. Were I obliged to say who has the most considerable share of lord Charbury's admiration, Constantia, Bab, or *my* wife, my declaration would certainly be in favour of the last of these three Graces, as his lordship always appeared to prefer *her* to the other two; perhaps politically, to prevent their being jealous. But I thought I observed his prepossession for Lucy before Miss Lewson came hither. Were Bab ten times handsomer than she is, and Lucy far less lovely, the latter would still, in my opinion, be the most alluring, and win the greatest number of hearts, from the peculiar gentleness in her manners, not commonly met with in her sex, by which even her features are rendered more enchanting.

I want, methinks, to know how Die bears this change in my affairs; and am astonished that I have heard nothing of her since my marriage.

No-



Nothing I hope, has happened to my dear boy : though I imagine that if poor Ned was not well she would have written to me, or have ordered Ellis to to send me a line about him.—Would I could persuade her to let me have the child! My mind would then be in a more easy state.

### L E T T E R XIII.

Miss BARBARA GRAFTON to Miss BLONDEL.

**Y**OU found me out, my dear Cecilia, in the two days you past with us after Lucy's marriage. I was not mistress enough of myself to conceal from *one* so penetrating, from *one* who has so long been acquainted with every thought of my heart, the impression which this too charming fellow has made upon it : and since you have discovered what I should have been glad to have hidden from every body but him alone who has occasioned my anxiety, I am very desirous of having *your* sincere opinion with regard to *his* opinion concerning me.—As you are so expert at finding out people's secret sentiments, you will, I hope, be able to guess at what passes in *his* heart as well as *mine*.—Don't be afraid of shocking me, but tell me freely, for I have not yet flattered myself with his being in love with me, though I believe I am a sort of a favourite with him—yet I fancy that Constantia will be the girl. There is something in my face and carriage, though I know I am handsomer than her, which does not perfectly please him; I am too quick, too lively, and have too much of the flirt

in my appearance, though not in my behaviour to him. He does not like that kind of woman. He allows me to have regular features—I can read his thoughts about me in his face—a good complexion, and all that; but miss Lewson's dove-like eyes, soft smiles, and melancholy air, please him more. Besides, he fancies himself I believe, under some sort of tie with regard to her, though he has hitherto talked as little of love to *her* as he has to *me*. He treats *me* like a real friend, of whose understanding he has a favourable opinion, and he treats her like an amiable young creature. She certainly is so—left entirely to his care—*she*, all the time, exults in having so charming a protector. I am sometimes provoked, I confess, to see how small an effect my person has upon the man, who is in no other respect an insensible.—*I*, who have had, and still have a train of admirers; *I*, who could never bring myself to think of any man but of this *one*, who cannot think of me, that is in the light I am speaking of, for in every other he looks upon me, I believe, as I would wish, am I own sometimes provoked at his indifference.—He seems, indeed, to have an unbounded confidence in me, and consults me about almost every branch of his domestic affairs, and never mentions a syllable with regard to his inclination for Constantia; so that I am, frequently, induced to think that he feels no other tenderness for her than the tenderness of a guardian for a ward, or a brother for a sister.—*She*, I believe, on the contrary, *loves him*, though she looks not as if she was acquainted with her own feelings on *his* account. She discovers the greatest  
delight

delight at his approach, and a kind of affectionate sorrow at his absence, while he shews no emotions either pleasurable or painful about her. I believe (I hope at least) that I have very much obliged him by inviting this young girl to stay with me, and she seems happy in my company, and perfectly desirous of improving herself by the rules which I lay down for her conduct, all which meet with *his* approbation. He was rather at a loss, I imagine, to know how to introduce her properly into the world; and as Lucy's marriage gave me a very good opportunity to have her with me, I could manage the affair without being particular.

Lucy is with us, but just now a little disquieted: her Dashwood has eloped a day or two, pleading urgent business for his departure.—He has been gone a week.—Lucy, however, has received a letter from him of a comfortable length, which she kissed as rapturously as she would have kissed the dear writer of it himself.—I *do* think married people are sometimes a little silly.—Well! I shall never swell the catalogue of wedded fools; for I shall certainly never marry at all.

#### L E T T E R   X I V .

The Honourable EDWARD DASHWOOD to Sir  
FRANCIS MOSTYN, Bart.

**R**ACKED with Die's silence, yet dreading every hour to hear that my boy was sick or dead, I told my wife I had some particular bu-



siness to transact in town, which I had postponed, in order to accelerate my marriage.

The excellent creature gave credit to what I said with her eyes; but those eyes were filled with tears when I quitted her.

I flew to Die's lodgings, but—good heaven!—what an object did I find her! She was raving in bed with a fever: I never saw any poor creature so delirious.—Conceive my distraction, knowing that my marriage had been the cause of the misery which I beheld.

I heartily chid the servants for not having informed me of her condition; and when I had endeavoured, but in vain, by my endearments, to restore her senses, and to make her capable of distinguishing me from those who attend her, I sent for another physician.

When the second physician came I feed him largely, and intreated him to spare no pains to remove her disorder, determining to wait the event by her bed-side, to which she begged me every moment to come, though I was so near her.

My dear little Edward was my only comfort; but I was afraid to let him stay in the room with me, lest he should catch a distemper, which appeared with such alarming symptoms.

However, as the physicians declared that the communication of her distemper was the less to be apprehended from its having been entirely occasioned by the extreme anxiety of her mind, which had violently affected her nerves, I indulged myself in having my sweet pratler with me.

By

By the great skill and care of Dr. ——— this poor creature's reason, in a few hours, returned; but her joy, at seeing me so near her, and at receiving so many proofs of my tenderness and concern, was so excessive, that it almost overthrew her intellects again: however we have, at length, removed the fever; she is, indeed, very weak, and in a very dejected state; but I hope in a few days more to see her in a fair way of being quite recovered.—What pangs have I not endured, lest I should have occasioned the death of a woman who loves me too tenderly to bear the thoughts of losing me. Yet we ought to separate immediately.—How can I apologize for this long absence to my wife? So soon after our marriage too?—But I cannot leave Die till she is still better than she is, for fear of a relapse.—I have, therefore, written a long letter to Lucy, though I swear I did not know what to say. I have spun out a heap of incoherent words, and can only hope that *she*, like many other women, will find no fault with nonsense, when it is the nonsense of love. Lucy, indeed, has an exceeding good understanding, as I have, I believe, told you before; but people very much in love think of the heart of the letter-writer more than the head, and will easily pardon all incorrect expressions, if there is but a number of kind ones.—Lucy, I hope, will be of this way of thinking.

You cannot imagine how much this last proof of my consideration for Die has affected her. It has thrown her into ecstasies, and I don't know how she will bring herself to part with me again.

—Could she but get the better of some little *femalities*, she would now be almost an angel: but jealousy and envy, those corroding passions, have taken such deep root into her mind within these few months, that she never, I fear, will be able to eradicate them. How eagerly does she seize every opportunity to ask me questions about the person, temper, and manners of my wife!—She even enters curiously into particulars, concerning which she ought to discover no curiosity; yet if I refuse to gratify it, she charges me with want of confidence in her, and want of love. I have, I confess, adhered strictly to truth in my description of my amiable Lucy, and by so doing have raised the above mentioned passions to such a height, that she has not only broken out into the most unjust and bitterest invectives against her, but also declared that if I shew any tenderness for Lucy, I shall absolutely destroy *her*, as she cannot, she says, exist, if I love any woman except herself: and indeed I believe this declaration proceeds from her extravagant fondness for me; because I think no woman can possibly doat on a man more than she does on me.—But I must return to my Lucy.—I am always considering about my removal from hence, but have not yet had courage to break the spell which confines me to this spot.—I have, at last, however, prevailed on *Die* to consent to my departure from her; but I could not *so* prevail on her, till I had promised to come back again to her soon; till I had sworn not to give my heart to this fine creature, as she calls my wife, by way of contempt. But whenever she

speaks



speaks of Lucy in so contemptuous a manner she makes me really angry with her, and forces me to tell her plainly that if she mentions my wife with so much disrespect I will see her no more.—Speeches of this kind, too often extorted from me, always produce tears, fits, &c.—which absolutely unman me, and convert me into a despicable driveller.

## LETTER XV.

From the same to the same.

Grafton House.

**W**HAT a striking difference is there between a mistress and a wife.—Who in his sober senses would prefer the former to the latter?

With what transports of joy did my excellent Lucy receive me?—Yet how chaste, how corrected were her raptures!—No upgradings, no complaints; no murmurs at my long absence expressed, but the highest satisfaction discovered in every feature at my return.—How very enchanting is this tenderness! it steals imperceptibly into the soul, and renders one enamoured when one least thinks of being so.

You cannot imagine how she twined herself about my heart by her winning and judicious behaviour. I actually embraced her with ardor unfeigned till that moment, while she received my caresses with a modesty which shewed that she thought herself the person obliged, and looked upon my endearments rather as indulgencies than debts.—

debts.—Yet I could not help sighing and turning my head aside, while I held her in my arms.—I felt myself undeserving of such an angel—I was sensibly touched.—She imputed my emotions, kindly imputed them to want of health, or to fatigue, and pressed me to take something to make me better.

During my wife's fond behaviour to me on my return, I plainly perceived that Sir Robert, who idolizes his Lucy, his favourite daughter, was very much offended at my having left her for so long a time so soon after her marriage, and threw out some pretty strong hints expressive of his displeasure.

The poor dear girl blushed, trembled, and discovered the greatest anxiety, lest I should be hurt by her father's behaviour, endeavouring to apologize for me in the prettiest manner imaginable.—I thanked her for exerting herself so sweetly in my favour, by straining her to my bosom, and by not seeming to observe that Sir Robert meant any thing particular.—My own father has also taken an opportunity to talk to me in a very friendly manner upon this subject, telling me that I could not frame any reasonable excuse for having left so fine a creature so soon after I became possessed of her; no excuse, indeed, but the very worst in the world. Surely he has not heard any thing very lately concerning Die.—I actually shudder with apprehension.—What a coward has guilt made of me?—Would I could summon resolution enough never to see her again! and I believe

believe I should have enough, could I but get away my boy from her.

My Lucy, who studies every hour to please me, to give me new pleasure, has proposed our going to the house taken for us in Berkeley square. I fancy the good girl is fearful lest her father should say something to disgust me; and truly Sir Robert is, I see plainly, a very hot man; extremely apt to fly in a passion upon the most trifling occasion. He has said nothing, indeed, at which I, conscious of my own ill conduct, can reasonably be affronted; but my wife, who is better acquainted with her father's temper than I can be, will be better pleased, I believe, to remove me out of his way: though I am certain she will be sorry to part with Bab, as there has ever been the strictest friendship between them.—

You may suppose that I invited miss Grafton to go with us; but she excused herself for the present.—I see through her excuse; she does not care to leave Charbury. She at first pretended to stay in the country on miss Lewson's account; but that difficulty was soon got over, as Lucy and myself both pressed Constantia to be of our party, who immediately received her guardian's approbation on her applying to him for it. Bab has promised to bring her young companion to us in less than a fortnight.

Die will, I suppose, be glad to have me nearer to her; but I shall be in a disagreeable situation in town, as I am afraid I shall not be able to avoid her as much as I wish to do.

L E T-



## LETTER XVI.

Miss GRAFTON to Miss BLONDEL.

THEY have all left us but miss Lewson, who is, I fancy, to be trusted to *my* care till she is married; that is, under the inspection of my lord, who comes almost every day to see us: I say *us*, because I hope and believe that I have some share in his visits.—Am I not vain to set any part of them down to *my* account?—But if I may judge from his behaviour to me, I am not thoroughly disagreeable in his eyes: though he gives me no reason to think that I shall ever be more esteemed by him than I am at present.—I should not be sorry to accompany that cold word *esteemed* with a softer one; but I fear I shall never be able to inspire him with the tender passion.—Some women now in *my* situation would be inclined to make a little love themselves.—You know what I mean child?—Discover their inclination to them by some stratagem or other.—But I am above all that.—No, Cecilia, as much as I prefer him to all the men in the world, I detest such mean proceedings.—My pride will never suffer me so far to degrade myself as to discover a partiality for a man who shews not the least prepossession in my favour. However, while I am thus keeping a discreet distance, and supporting my dignity with a becoming spirit, I'll lay any wager that my young artless friend here carries off her man.—She is  
certainly

certainly in love with him ; ay, and deeply too though she does not seem to know it.—She sighs when he is absent, and blushes when he is mentioned ; nay, whenever he appears she flies to meet him, and dresses her pretty innocent face in smiles, which makes it look still more beautiful. He treats her with all the good-nature of a brother ; he has not the least appearance of a lover ; but these serious, sober fellows are always astonishingly sly : and I sometimes fancy that she will be contented if he behaves to her with no greater fondness than he does at present, provided he does not discover more for any other woman.

I leave them frequently alone.—They both, I think, seem pleased with my doing so.—Am I not extremely convenient ? I am sure lord Charbury has reason to be satisfied with me ; and indeed he appears so—Yet he takes care not to make too many acknowledgments : he leaves *them* to Constantia, who performs her part admirably, and sometimes overpowers me with her affection. However, I am afraid I feel something very like envy and jealousy now and then.—I hate myself for looking on the sweet girl with the eyes of a rival, whom I actually love, nevertheless, because I am certain that in professing a regard for me, she speaks the language of her heart. She pays an implicit obedience to me as well as to my lord.—I am to carry her to Mrs. Dashwood's next week. She will then be introduced, for the first time, to the public diversions ; and she will exhibit the prettiest little figure that has appeared a great while.—Perhaps she may charm some new object, and  
be

be detached from my lord.—I wish, you may be sure, to see her detached from him; but I doubt my wish will not be soon gratified; for, unlike all other females, she expresses no sort of desire to see any body but her dear guardian; to be seen by any body but by *him*—take notice that the word *dear* is added by me.—However, though she does not make use of that pretty monosyllable in *my* hearing, I dare say it is always at her tongue's end; and therefore I have, I presume, applied it with propriety.

To convince you now that these two people have no sort of aversion to each other.—

I came upon them unawares yesterday, and found my lord talking earnestly to her with his hand upon her shoulder, while she looked rather dejected; though she every now and then peeped up in his face with smiles which sufficiently informed me that nothing from his lordship's lips could be disagreeable to *her* ears.

When I came up to them, “this little girl, miss Grafton, said he, tapping her cheek, which glowed at his touch, has no great inclination to leave the country, I find.”

“Not to leave *you*, my lord,” replied she, with what I really call a tender smile, while a gentle sigh softly stole from her bosom.

This pretty answer actually moved him, I believe; for the dear man is quite good natured.

With a second pat upon her blushing cheek, taking her hand at the same time, and pressing it, he said, “My sweet Constantia, I shall be in town.—The country, added he, with a smile on  
me,



me, can have no charms, when the amiable inhabitants of these shades have deserted them."—He then left us.

Now don't you think there was something tender in his carriage?—To be sure he treats her in a familiar style, and like a child; but then he treats her like a child of whom he is fond, and she undoubtedly, believes it her duty to love him.—She has, indeed, nobody else to love.—She looks upon me as her *friend*; but he is her *friend, relation, lover*, every thing, I dare swear, in *her* eyes. Girls of her age are very apt to have fancies—but why do I talk of *her* fancies—have I not had enough of my own since I became acquainted with this man? Yet, though I cannot help *thinking* of him, I might surely suppress my thoughts; I need not commit them to paper.—But there is a pleasure in talking of him to a bosom friend, superior to any thing I can at present enjoy, except his delightful conversation; and therefore you will be troubled with a great deal more upon this bewitching subject.

Adieu.

B. G.

P. S. Mr. Ash is returned from Paris, and still persecutes me with his love. Any woman but me might like Mr. Ash: his person is not amiss; his fortune is immense.—But if I was not in a humour to listen to him before I knew lord Charbury, how should I be inclined to hear his addresses now?—And yet I will not absolutely discard him.—I will first try—though I know my trial will be a fruitless one—whether my civil re-

ception of Ash will any way affect his lordship.—But stay—I don't intend to be married to him, even if my lord should be united to Constantia.—Surely you cannot call this coquetry.—Well! if it is I *must* make this one experiment.—I hope it may be reckoned a pardonable attempt, as the object in view is of so much consequence to me.

Once more adieu.

### LETTER XVII.

The Honourable EDWARD DASHWOOD to  
Sir FRANCIS MOSTYN, Bart.

Berkley-square.

**O**N E inconvenience has attended my coming to town, which I indeed expected.—I am too near Die.—She will not let me be at peace.—She is for ever sending for me, and watching me also, I fancy, as I frequently see her fellow lurking about, as if he was employed for that purpose: so that I dare not even come to the window with my wife, lest this devil should be informed of it.—Yet how laudable is every proof of my tenderness to a woman, who so truly deserves it, by making it her whole study to please *me*?—Besides, did she not merit it by her unabated attentions, is she not my wife? Have I not sworn to love and cherish her? Is it not my duty, and ought it not to be my inclination to keep my oath inviolate?

I have seen Die since I came to town as often as I could be reasonably expected by her. I have settled a handsome annuity on her and her son out  
of

of the money my father allowed me for the payment of my *debts* before I married, and I have also discharged the heaviest of *her's*—I cannot do every thing at once; and yet she will not be satisfied, unless I discover not only a dislike, but an absolute disgust to the most amiable creature in the world—my *wife*.—I have always taken the greatest care not to mention Mrs. Dashwood before her; she is not content with my extreme *reticence* in that respect. She is always endeavouring to introduce something which alludes to my wife, and then proceeds to find fault with, and cavil at her in a manner beyond endurance. She certainly has her spies every where; for she often informs me of circumstances with which she could not possibly, I think, be acquainted, except she was in the house with me.—Nay I swear, I believe she can tell exactly how often I kiss my wife: and whenever I attempt by my endearments to put a stop to such idle nonsense, she pushes me from her, telling me she can taste Lucy's kisses—she never calls her Mrs. Dashwood, or my wife—on my lips. If I chide her ever so gently for such behaviour, or only look displeased without saying a syllable, she either bursts into a flood of tears, or falls into a fit, out of which she cannot be recovered in some hours.—When she is in such a condition I don't know how to leave her: I am insensibly induced to stay with her till she is better, and am very frequently tempted, in hopes of conciliating her to me, to give her an expensive toy.

This disposition of mine, however, drew me into a cursed scrape the other day: I had bought



so many things for her since I had any money to purchase them, that I began to be almost ashamed of myself, and to think that my wife had a right to some gallantries of a similar kind as well as my mistress, especially as she is much the more quiet of the two.

Happening to go into a shop to chuse a ring for Die, I saw *one* which might, I thought, be acceptable to Lucy, and accordingly purchased a couple.—A gentleman of my acquaintance at that moment coming by, dragged me away with him, and prevented me from going home first according to my intention.—Being near Die's lodgings when we parted, I stepped in, and taking out the ring I had purchased for her, *that* which I had bought for my wife unluckily fell upon the floor.—She instantly picked it up, and cried, "What, have you got two rings for me?"

"No, replied I—not thinking it necessary for her to have them both at once—*This* putting it on—is what I chose for *you*."

"And for whom is the other?" said she, without casting her eyes on the new ornament to her finger—without even thanking me for it.

This question embarrassed me, I confess not a little.—I was weak enough to be afraid of telling her what I intended to do with it, because I knew that she would resent my discovering any attention to my wife. I therefore said, that I had at first taken the other ring, but not liking it so well as the ring I had just put on her finger, would carry it back again.

"That's

“ That’s false, I am sure, replied she, with uncommon fury in her eyes, for you bought it for your Lucy. Is this the indifference you would make me believe you feel for her? Oh! how cruelly have I been, how cruelly am I still deceived; but she shall not long enjoy these proofs of your love.—I’ll let her know what a vile hypocrite you are to us both, and then she will be miserable, though not half so wretched as she has made *me*: for though you are so cursed a dissembler, you are as lovely as you are inconstant.”

Such a compliment issuing from so delicious a mouth, and accompanied with a shower of tears, could not but touch me.—I strove by every art I was master of to soothe her mind to peace; but it was all to no purpose.—I could not succeed.—She vowed she should have no rest unless I would give her both the rings, or at least promise to let my wife have neither of them.—I was, I declare, a great while very loth to comply with so unreasonable a request; but at last was forced to give up the point, and to let her have her own way, inexpressibly terrified lest she should actually, as she had threatened me, make my dear Lucy acquainted with what I wish forever to conceal from her; lest she should know to how undeserving a wretch she is married.—What reason have I not to wish that she may remain ignorant of my unpardonable demerits!—Never surely was there a more amiable creature.

Determined not to suffer Die’s outrageous behaviour to divert me from paying a proper attention to my amiable wife, I left her: and, to avoid any

farther bustle, left her in possession of the two rings. —I then flew to the toy-shop, though she made me swear not to present any thing to my Lucy, and chose a more valuable and elegant ring for her; and she received it, when I carried it home, with so much satisfaction sparkling in her eyes, with such expressions of gratitude, that I was overpaid for the little proof of my regard for her. With what pleasure did she look at it!—how much did she admire it!—How many fine things did she say to me upon the occasion!—Oh! how severely did I feel my folly in ever bestowing a thought on Die!—In how contemptible a light did she appear to me, compared to my angel, my Lucy!—Pressing my excellent wife to my bosom, I poured out the tenderest language, and smote at the same time by remorse, wept over her lovely neck.—The dear girl saw my emotions; but far from guessing at the cause of them, believed I had got a cold, and tenderly kissing those ungrateful eyes, which had so often looked with fondness upon another, wished it was in her power to make them better.—Admirable creature!—At that moment, forgetting Die, forgetting every thing but the angel I held in my arms, I gave a loose to my feelings, and never, I swear, found myself so truly happy.

We expect Bab and miss Lewson. If you come to town, call and look at them. Who knows, Mostyn, but that you may bear the prize from Charbury. Adieu.

E. D.

L E T-



## L E T T E R XVIII.

Miss GRAFTON to Miss BLONDEL.

**W**E have been in town above a week, and engaged perpetually : hurrying from one diversion to another, or else you would have heard from me before.—Yet neither the novelty of the place, nor its gaieties, nor the assiduities of fine fellows crowding round her, have any effect upon Constantia. She sighs, in secret, for Charbury, who has not yet joined us.

“ If Constantia’s passion is a secret, how came you to know it ? ”

Possibly, I guess at *her* feelings by *my own*. However, be that as it will, her indifference to every thing about her, her perfect inattention, her restlessness, and her frequent reveries, convince me thoroughly that she thinks more on what she has left behind than on what she meets with here ; though every thing is done to amuse her, and though she has already had a number of admirers.—Dashwood and my sister spare no pains to entertain us, and to give us pleasure : they seem entirely happy in each other. Lucy, though, I think, not in full health, (perhaps there may be a reason for that) never looked handsomer, never seemed more completely satisfied.—Dashwood treats her in the most agreeable manner to be imagined.—Were all men like him, no woman would be afraid of matrimony.—Yet, though he is so affectionately solicitous to please her, a gloom sometimes

sometimes overspreads his fine face, which makes us fear that he is not well, or that something gives him disquiet. My sister now and then, though with great tenderness, ventures to express her anxiety about his health: but as her enquiries only produce new endearments from him, she is not profuse of them. She indeed often fears, and I believe hopes, that she is mistaken.—But what can make so sensible, so amiable a man, so mighty serious at times?—In short, men are incomprehensible creatures, and so I will have done with them.—However, I must speak a word or two about Ash.

Ash followed me to town directly; he has dangled after me ever since; and I am determined to encourage him, right or wrong, till I see if my encouragement makes any impression upon Charbury, whom I expect every hour.—If he does not come soon, I shall, I am certain, be obliged to return with Constantia, who begins to grow very restless. She was exclaiming yesterday against London with such violence, and launched out into such extravagant praises on the country, that I told her I fancied she had left her heart behind her, and must go down after it.

Her face and neck immediately glowed like crimson. She hung her head, and looked so extremely silly, that I almost pitied her, and yet could not help telling her that if she went on sighing and pining thus, I must carry her to Grafton house for a change of air—though perhaps, added I, you had rather go to Elm Park, child.

“ My

"My dear Bab, replied the poor girl, blushing almost to tears, pray spare me.—I shall be very happy with you wherever you are."

"You would be a great deal happier child, said I, if lord Charbury was here: but have a little patience, Constantia; when he is married, you may live entirely with his lady."

"Married! exclaimed she, with a still deeper blush.—Then instantly turning as pale as death, is he going to be married, madam? continued she, and turned her face from me to wipe the tears which rushed into her eyes.

"No, said I; but he undoubtedly *will* marry: such a fine young fellow, and so uncommonly sober for a man of fashion, will not certainly always live without a wife."

This speech was on purpose to make her think reasonably about an event, which may possibly happen, contrary to her wishes: but she is really farther gone than I could have believed; for she could not, without the greatest difficulty, recover herself from the confusion into which my conjectures had thrown her.—She would have left the room, but I detained her.—"Why sure, child, said I, you could not be sorry to see lord Charbury happily married, as you have such a prodigious esteem for him."

"Ought I not to esteem him? replied she; has he not been very good to me? and have you not just now spoken in his praise?"

"Yes, my dear Constantia, said I, no woman upon earth can have a higher opinion of a man than I have of lord Charbury."

"Then



“Then I can’t be wrong, answered the flattering girl, with a simplicity, however, which charmed me, for I am sure you do every thing that’s right.—I wish I was sure of myself; but I am not so blind as not to see my own faults; and I have honesty enough to own them.”

We shall see.—I am likely to be put to *my* trial: for if Charbury marries miss Lewson I shall have occasion for all my fortitude.—And I believe it will be wanted, if he happens to be as much prejudiced in *her* favour as she is in *his*.—We have got, indeed, two other lovers to comfort us for the present.—The one is a gentle thing, gentle as ourselves; the other quite a gay fellow, almost as mad as I am; but neither of them are to my young friend’s taste.—No—she will certainly die if she has not the man on whom she has settled her affections.—In that case, if he should happen to prefer me, I must—give him up.

## LETTER XIX.

From the same to the same.

THE dear man is come to town. Constantia is out of her little wits for joy.—Her joy at the sight of him was boundless; for she told him freely how transported she was to see him.—I won’t swear that she made use of that very word *transported*; but she flew to him with her face glowing, and her heart—I am sure—fluttering, and almost threw herself breathless into his arms—that is she ran to meet him, and he caught her,  
and

and kissed her.—“She is, my child, miss Grafton,” said he, smiling—then thinking, I suppose, that I looked as if I expected to be noticed in the same manner, he approached me with a modest air, gave *me* also a very respectful kiss, by way of expressing his acknowledgements to me for my care of his darling.—It was quite unnecessary—but I was not angry. How can one be angry with so pretty a fellow?—He then sat down by miss Lewson, and taking her hand in his, said, “Now tell me, my Constantia, how you like the town?”

“She cannot but like it, said I; for she has got two lovers already, and admirers innumerable.”

“No, indeed, miss Grafton,” replied the blushing girl.

“Nay, my Constantia, said my lord, if they are worthy of you, and if you like them—

“But I do not like them, my lord, interrupted she eagerly, and I beg that I may not be obliged to receive them”—(looking quite frightened)—

“Don’t alarm yourself, my dear girl, said my lord, you never shall be obliged by me to do any thing that is not agreeable to you; but as you will certainly marry, miss Lewson, if these men are men of merit, and every way suitable in other respects, one of them may, possibly, in time, render himself deserving of your attention.”

“Oh! no, never, indeed, my lord—Pray don’t think so.”—

“Be composed, my Constantia, replied he, pressing her hand, you may be assured that I will never compel you to see any man of whom you do not approve.”—

“I know

"I know you are all goodness, my lord, said she with a look most innocently tender; but I wish you would also believe that I cannot admit any offers of that nature."

"How! answered he, somewhat hastily; what, have you made a resolution never to be married?"

"No—but—pray, my lord—let us talk no more upon this subject just now," said she, covering her face with her hands to hide her confusion, while he, throwing one arm round her, and putting his other hand on her heart, cried, with an affectionate smile, "Poor dear girl, how fluttered are your spirits: but indeed, these violent emotions would rather induce me to apprehend that you were in love with somebody.—What's your opinion, my dear miss Bab?"

In truth he could not have applied to a more improper person, at a more improper time; for I was little less agitated than the poor trembling girl, who was just ready to own her passion for him: but luckily Constantia, who, with all her simplicity, began, I believe, to see that things were going rather too far, seized the moment when he turned to speak to me, and left the room.

His lordship then asked me seriously who those gentlemen hinted at by me were, and whether they had really made any impression on miss Lewson's young heart.

By these questions he gave me both time and courage, as I was not immediately concerned in them, to recover from my confusion.—I told him that so far from liking either of them, she always seemed most eagerly to avoid them, and that no-  
body



body whom she had seen in London had, in my opinion, touched her heart.

He was buried in a profound reverie for some time.—Then, all at once, resuming his former cheerfulness, repeated his thanks to me for the great attention I had shewn to miss Lewson, who had very much improved, he obligingly said, by copying so amiable an original.

Had I been to die, Cecilia, I could not have suppressed a sigh at this compliment.—I have looked grave ever since. I cannot even bear the sight of Ash: I purposely encouraged him before Charbury came to town, in order to see if I could make him jealous by flirting with another man.—Yet now I can scarcely be civil to him, but snatch every opportunity to converse with my lord.—Shall I tell you what a silly whim has entered into my wild head?—I fancied that Charbury, by appearing so ready to let Constantia be married to either of her lovers, had no real design upon her himself, and that there might be hopes for me.—How I heat myself for being so credulous.—To be in love is surely to be very foolish.—But who is always wise?—For *my* part I don't pretend to be so.

## L E T T E R XX.

The Honourable EDWARD DASHWOOD to  
Sir FRANCIS MOSTYN, Bart.

I Must break off my connection with Die, whatever be the consequence. Her behaviour grows every day more insupportable, while the carriage of my wife, my amiable Lucy, hourly improves upon me. The latter, dear girl, has a bad cold. For two days I insisted upon her keeping her room, in which I endeavoured to make her confinement as little irksome as possible, and had the satisfaction to see her infinitely pleased with my attentions about her.

She was but just got down stairs when Bab and Constantia expressed a great desire to see Garrick in King Richard.—My wife was too obliging to let her indisposition deprive them of so high an entertainment of the dramatic kind.—Lord Charbury and I, therefore, with Mr. Ash, accompanied them. Before we went, however I made Lucy promise to wrap up, telling her that as she was an old married woman, there was no occasion for her to regard her dress.

“Indeed, my dear Mr. Dashwood, replied the excellent creature, with a sweet smile, I think I had never so much reason as I have at present to attend to the setting off my person to the greatest advantage, as I wish more than ever to preserve the heart of the most amiable of men.”

Accordingly

Accordingly, she appeared at dinner in the most elegant undress I ever beheld.

We went early, being sure of a crowded house, and my matron-like Lucy, putting the two girls before her, I placed myself behind her, as well to take care that she did not encrease her cold, as to assist her if she should not be well.—You may laugh at me if you will; but I could not have spent an evening more agreeably, had not my apprehensions on *her* account disturbed me. I was very much afraid indeed that the excessive heat of the house, added to the agitation of her passions, would be prejudicial to her; for she is not yet in a condition to bear much fatigue. I, therefore, as soon as the play was over, and the crowd a little dispersed, led her carefully to the coach, first tying her cloak myself that I might be sure she was kept warm, till she got home. The endearments which I received for my affectionate assiduities, for my dutiful assiduities I may say, over-paid me for them.

When I went the next day to make a visit to Die agreeably to my promise, I found her almost choaked with passion, and scarcely able to articulate a syllable.—I attempted to calm her by taking her in my arms.

Pushing me from her with all her force, “Keep off—cried she, with the most provoking disdain—or you will infect me, coming from that tall awkward creature, whom you call your wife.—Never was there such a lifeless mawkin.—But since you can make yourself ridiculous enough to be fond of her in public, I have done with you—



done with you for ever.—Yet I think, Mr. Dashwood, I ought but in justice to her, though she is such an insipid thing, to let her know what a cursed hypocrite she has married.—Poor woman! she little thinks what a devil she has to deal with; as I suppose she would hardly have sat so quietly half leaning on your bosom, rolling her large unmeaning eyes, while she suffered you to dandle her like a jointed doll.—Furies seize her!”

This address was not, you may imagine, very agreeable to me.—I therefore availed myself of her stopping for want of breath to proceed, to ask her how she came to know all that had passed.—“I am very much surprised, however, added I, at one part of your speech; for every body must allow my Lucy’s person to be very attracting, must allow her to have the finest eyes in the world.”

“Devil, devil!—replied she, rising in a rage, and coming up to me—Do you think so, after all?—Oh, villain! how you have deceived us both!”

“Faith! not I; for I love you both extremely,” said I, affecting the greatest composure

“Love, monster!—No, no—such a base, deceitful heart as your’s is incapable of love.—Oh! that I could tear it out—I would—yes, I would stamp it under my feet—I long to tread your soul out.”—

“And so you really think—said I, still apparently unmoved—that this fury is becoming? And that I shall like you the better for it, especially when

when it is all for nothing ; for you cannot know what passed at the play, as you was not there."

" There you are mistaken, Sir—replied she—I was in one of the green boxes, and saw all that passed ; saw for the first time this wife of your's, who is a very insignificant thing, or I should not have been so much vexed to see you make such a fuss with her.—Had she really been a lovely woman I could not have wondered at it, as every man, engaged or not, must be affected at the sight of beauty ; but to make such a rout about so ordinary a figure—I could hardly believe my eyes : but that I might have all the conviction in my power, I hastened down to the very box door, and saw you lead her out as tenderly as if she had been made of glass. On somebody's laughing, for you was pretty well sneered at, for being so careful about a wife—the reply was—" Oh ! she's breeding."—Is it thus you have kept your promise, villain ! villain !"

I had hitherto kept my temper, and thought to have continued unmoved ; but when I saw her sink down in an agony, I could hold out no longer. I ran to her, and raised her in my arms, tho' I confess I could not help smiling at her having thought it possible for me to live with so fine a woman, and have no sort of connection with her.

Lucy is, indeed, a dear lovely creature : her touch is absolutely enchanting. She gains upon me prodigiously, I assure you.—I almost forgot Die, while I reflected upon the treasure I had in my possession ; yet I would not have you think that

I am of an inconstant disposition.—I would not be fickle even to the woman who by her folly makes herself the most contemptible character to be conceived. Her follies will not apologize for mine.—But my Lucy's superiority is so striking, I should be totally blind not to see it; I should act in the most inexcusable manner not to admire, not to adore it. The dear delightful creature is so transported with my returning love—Oh! she is every thing the heart of man can wish.—Why, why am not I worthy of such an angel?—But to return to *Die*.—She, at length, came to herself, and we patched up a peace: for my compassion for *her*, and my affection for my pretty Edward, would not suffer me to abandon her entirely.—When you come to be a father, Mostyn, you will know how to *feel* for me.

## L E T T E R    XXI.

Miss GRAFTON to Miss BLONDEL.

**Y**OU cannot imagine how distressed we have been. Lord Charbury has had a violent fever. He was seized one night at the opera; and as he had been invited by my brother and sister to be with them while his own house in St. James's-square is repairing, we had the care of him. We were a good deal alarmed about him; but, considering our fears and terrors, have nursed him pretty well. Mrs. Dashwood was superintendant, and I acted as chief nurse, for poor Constantia was too much



much frightened to do any thing. She has, indeed, by her faintings and tears plainly discovered that she cannot live without him. I never saw a poor creature so affected in my life.—I have been very bad myself, but behaved tolerably; at least, I hope, I kept down every passion but esteem; though I will own that I suffered not a little by endeavouring to stifle many emotions upon the trying occasion.—The dear sick creature has behaved like an angel, tenderly compassionating the wretched Constantia—wretched she has been indeed—and shewing a respectful friendship for me.—For my part—however strange my declaration may appear—I never have been so happy and so miserable in my life; trembling with terror, almost sinking with concern, and yet charmed to a degree beyond expression at the very great satisfaction which he discovered at my assiduity and solicitude about him. I gave him most of his medicines; for Constantia was not in a condition to be trusted. I sat by him, read and sung, to him, when he seemed to wish to be so amused; and when I had done, smothered my sorrow, lest he should be affected with it.

Having read to him a considerable time one day, I was in hopes that he had fallen asleep at last, and covering my face gave a free vent to my tears.

On a sudden hearing him sigh, I opened the curtain in a hurry to see if any thing was the matter, quite forgetting my own situation.

Looking earnestly in my face, a still deeper sigh than mine broke from him. He snatched my hand to his lips, and kissed it with such fervour, that I at first became quite abashed; but immediately

ately recovering myself, and fearing that he was light-headed, ran to fetch the nurse to my assistance.—Poor dear Charbury!—He recovers now apace, but seems to have a disorder upon his spirits, which will not, I doubt, be easily removed. Constantia is almost distracted with joy to find him better, and takes no pains to conceal her affection for her guardian; an affection which he returns in the prettiest manner imaginable, and for which I am not offended with him, though it cuts off all my hopes for ever.

I had once, I told you, intended to play off Ash against him.—I made an attempt of that kind, but it was unsuccessful.—I am not in a humour for trifling.—Charbury alone has all my heart; but he must not know how deep an impression he has made on it.—He goes out of town in a few days for the air. Adieu.

## L E T T E R XXII.

Lord CHARBURY to the Honourable EDWARD DASHWOOD.

**W**HAT a violent struggle have I had, my dear Dashwood, between compassion and inclination!—What has it not cost me to tear myself from the woman of my choice, and to bring myself to give my hand to an amiable young creature, who will never be happy I too plainly see without me, while my whole heart is devoted to the charming Bab. But though *she* deserves all my tenderness I cannot make Constantia wretched.

Before

Before I saw either of the Miss Graftons, I looked upon myself, you know, in some sort engaged to Miss Lewson. Nothing indeed about an alliance between us was ever hinted at by me; but I found that such an alliance had been earnestly desired both by *her* father and mine.—I was free you will say, as I had given no promise.—I was certainly so; but after a few visits which I made to Constantia, visits unavoidable, on her coming immediately under my protection, I found her so pleased with my company, so loth to let me leave her, and so very eager to engage me to permit her being with me, that I began to entertain thoughts of complying with the wishes of our fathers. On my purchasing Elm Park, you, believing that you should give me pleasure by so doing, introduced me to the two lovely sisters; and indeed I received singular pleasure from your introduction. From that introduction, however, I date all the uneasiness which I at present endure.—Bab soon appeared in *my* eyes the most desirable woman I had ever seen.—Pleasing in her person, lively, sensible, accomplished, and good-natured, she charmed me. With her good nature I was particularly delighted, and she has been improving upon me ever since.—Had I never known Constantia I should hope to have rendered myself as agreeable to *her* as *she* appeared to me: but finding that every time I saw Constantia her affections for me increased, I felt myself not selfish enough to prefer *my own* happiness to *her's*, especially as I had no reason to flatter myself with having made the impression upon Miss Grafton—notwithstanding



withstanding all her politeness—which I had done on Constantia.—I could, therefore, only hurt myself in complying with Miss Lewson's wishes, by giving her the preference to the woman I should otherwise have chosen. But fond as the poor girl was of me—for she discovered her fondness by numberless little inadvertencies, I could not think of marrying her directly from a boarding-school, without the least introduction into life.

While I was in this situation, Miss Grafton by her extreme good-nature, encouraged me to inform her of the state of my affairs with the greatest freedom; and when I had unbosomed myself, kindly offered to let Miss Lewson be with *her*, as she should be glad of a young companion to supply the place of Mrs. Dashwood.—She also genteely invited my girl before your marriage, that she might have an opportunity of seeing a ceremony so new to her, and of improving herself by the company of the people of fashion who were to be present at it.—You may suppose that this proceeding of Bab's did not make me like her less: on the contrary her engaging behaviour, both to Constantia and to me, quite won my heart.—But then poor Constantia's increasing tenderness for me, which she discovered by every look and gesture, and the melancholy diffused over her features whenever I neglected her, or took notice of her friend, so touched me, so excited my pity, that I could not help doing every thing in my power to relieve her distressed mind.—Most gladly did I consent to her acceptance of Mrs. Dashwood's and your kind invitation, not without

out hopes that she might see other men more agreeable to her than myself, and consequently leave me at liberty to follow my own inclination. She has seen *some* who have very much endeavoured to please her; but she can hardly bear to hear them named. I have both rallied her, and talked seriously to her about her unreasonable antipathies, but to no purpose.—In short, her sighs, her tears, her tender glances frequently directed to me, her eagerness to fly to me whenever I appear, her regret at leaving me, tho' for ever so short a time, are indubitable proofs of her tender attachment to me: those proofs and the declaration which she made to me when I urged her to admit lord Hillwood's addresses, have rendered it necessary for me to come to some resolution about her, as she has declared that she would rather be *my* Constantia than a *queen*.

Just at this time my reflections on Bab's charming behaviour towards so unformed, though so amiable a creature, and on her increasing politeness to me, gave me the greatest concern, as I could not even attempt to gain *her* without making the other unhappy; so intense indeed was my concern upon the occasion, and so severe was the conflict in my bosom, that I was really thrown into a fever.—During my sufferings under the shocks which that disorder gave to my constitution, I had still more opportunities to see into the characters of these lovely girls. Constantia was indeed so totally oppressed by seeing me so ill, that she fell into tremblings and fainting fits, so that  
the

the dear adorable Bab had very soon the sole care of me ; and she did, indeed, exert herself with uncommon spirit, I may add, tenderness.—Oh, Dashwood ! I sometimes flattered myself that she discovered something more than mere humanity for the poor suffering object before her, when she thought nobody observed her.—She read to me—she even sung to me, as if in pity to my pain, and now and then a gentle sigh escaped from her soft bosom.—Nay once I saw her weep ; yes, I saw tears of compassion trinkling down her angelic countenance.—Gracious G—d ! what became of me at that intoxicating moment ? I forgot that I had never professed a passion, the concealment of which had half destroyed me. I forgot that Constantia was almost expiring with her terrors for me ; I forgot every thing but the enchanting instant when I believed this amiable woman did not behold me with indifference.—Snatching her hand to my burning lips, I kissed it with an ardour beyond expression ; and yet she did not seem angry, but continued her charming solicitude about me.—Was not this encouragement sufficient, had I been at liberty to avail myself of it ?—I cannot, however, see Constantia languishing, dying and not offer my hand, my heart, to save her life.—I must, therefore, give up all thoughts of the dear creature on whom I doat, and marry her who doats on me. I am a fellow of consummate vanity, you will say ; but I have stated the case very fairly, and with the pen of truth.—As I have so stated it, I hope you will be strongly induced to pity

Your's, CHARBURY.  
P. S.



P. S. I came hither declaredly for the air ; but in fact to be out of the way of temptation.—I must, however, make an excursion, I believe, to some other place, or Constantia's fears will bring *her* and her bewitching friend to visit me in my retirement.

## L E T T E R   XXIII.

Mrs. DASHWOOD to Miss BLONDEL.

**Y**OU complain of my long silence, my dear Cecilia, and say that I have forgotten you, though you are, at the same time, considerate enough to tell me that you make great allowances for me, as you suppose me to have many more engagements now I am in London than when I was in the Country : but I do assure you, my friend, that I chiefly employ myself in studying to improve my person and my mind, in hopes of rendering myself more worthy of my dear Mr. Dashwood, having the greatest reason in the world to love and esteem a man so perfectly amiable.—On our first acquaintance I thought his person very attractive, and his manners exceedingly elegant : but I did not then believe that he would treat me with such uncommon affection, and give up so much of his time to me alone.

I have not been very well ; but by no means ill enough to alarm Mr. Dashwood, or indeed to confine myself : but his extreme solicitude obliged me to keep close to my own apartment ; and in

order to prevent my being tired with the dullness of it from day to day, he almost shut himself up with me.—He also took so much pains to entertain me, and was so attentive to me when I came abroad again, lest I should by fatigue, or by catching cold, occasion the return of my disorder, that I can never sufficiently repay his tenderness. I don't think that there is a happier creature breathing than I am; and my happiness is entirely owing to my union with this charming man. I wish I could see our dear Bab *as* happy; but I fear she is not in a way to be so at present.—She is undoubtedly attached to lord Charbury, who looks upon himself, I firmly believe, in point of honour engaged to miss Lewson, though not bound by any promise to her.—'Tis easy to see that Constantia is extravagantly fond of him; but from what my dear Mr. Dashwood has dropped, and from my own observations, I am strongly inclined to imagine that he prefers Bab to *her*. However, he is a man of very nice principles: I have heard him more than once declare in conversation that the man who seduced a woman's affections, and deserted her afterwards, appeared to him the greatest of all villains; and that he looked on him who could see a good young creature pine herself to death for him, without wishing to relieve her, though not the woman of his choice, as a man who deserved the most opprobrious names.—Tell me now if you think our friend can reasonably encourage any hopes.—Sorry as I am to see no prospect of her being settled to her satisfaction, I own I honour the man who entertains

entertains such exalted sentiments. Were this the general mode of thinking among the men, how many women would stand a fair chance of being as happy as

Your sincere friend,

L. DASHWOOD.

P.S. I had forgot to tell you what a pretty groupe they made the evening before lord Charbury left us to go down to Elm Park to complete his recovery, having been very much out of order, but very well nursed by Bab.—He, as the sick person, was seated in an elbow-chair, his head was leaning upon his hand; his eyes were fixed languishingly on Bab, who, sitting near him, at his request singing a pathetic air to him, accompanied by her mandoline.—Constantia stood leaning on the back of his chair, with one hand upon his shoulder, hanging over him as if she feared he should be too much affected by Bab's musick.—Mr. Dashwood said he should like to have them all in a picture; and indeed a masterly painter would have had an opportunity to make a very agreeable one.—I told Bab what he said when we were alone, and she laughed out at me.—She carries it off very well, but I believe she feels sometimes sensations extremely painful.—Mr. Dashwood has just sent me in the finest pair of China jars.—He is continually sending me something elegantly useful.



## L E T T E R XXIV.

The Honourable EDWARD DASHWOOD to Sir  
FRANCIS MOSTYN, Bart.

**T**HOUGH I could not bring myself to give up Die entirely, I staid away longer than usual, because I wanted inclination to go to her, and because I thought it right to wean myself from her by degrees.—Could I but get away my boy, and be certain that she would never discover to my wife our connection, I would quit her this moment for ever.—I fear, however, that she will neither let me have my son, nor govern her passions as she ought to do. I have received a very threatening letter from her.—Unluckily I was not at home when the chairman brought it; Hopkins forgot to give it to me—purposely, it may be; for all the servants doat upon their lady.—I have been within an ace of being found out.

Would you believe it, Mostyn—this devil carried my boy, my little Edward, to Ranelagh on the very night when she knew my wife was to be there, and threw both him and herself so directly in her way, that she could not well avoid taking notice of the Child, as he is indeed remarkably beautiful.—I hope she has really done me no mischief with my Lucy.—There is not the least change in her carriage to me: I therefore conclude that she has no suspicions about me; but you may be sure that this malevolent wretch intended to occasion a breach between us; for she loudly bragged  
to

to me of what she had done; and, in consequence of her irritating behaviour, we had a very serious and violent quarrel.—She provoked me to make use of the severest expressions, and I left her highly inflamed with anger.—There was no suffering such insolence to pass unresented.—After all, I do not believe that she will dare to make any considerable discoveries; for I solemnly swore that if she did, I never more would see either her or her boy, though my heart almost relented when the sweet fellow ran after me, and hung by my coat, with his pretty eyes full of tears, begging me to come back to his mama. I shook him off, however; I was even cruel enough to threaten the innocent child.—It cut me to the soul; but I threatned *him* merely to intimidate his mother.

## L E T T E R XXV.

MRS. GRAFTON to Miss BLONDEL.

**O**H, my Cecilia, what monsters are men!—A few, a very few hours ago, I could have written a panegyric upon the agreeable wretches, but now I am ready to pen the most virulent satire against them.—You will I know be astonished when I tell, that Dashwood, that my brother, is the man who has thrown me into this satirical humour, who has drawn such sharp expressions from me.—Poor Lucy!—how I honour, how I pity her!—though she is not yet unhappy.—He either *is* extravagantly fond of her, or he has the art to make her believe he is.—She does not, indeed, I think, see things as they really are.—After

all, they may not be so bad as they appear to me; but they certainly have not a favourable aspect.

A night or two after Charbury left us, poor Constantia was so very low spirited, that my sister, to divert her melancholy, proposed going to Ranelagh. Mr. Dashwood was pre-engaged, or she would not have gone, I believe, on any account without him.

We had not been there long, when an exceeding fine woman, elegantly dressed, appeared, accompanied by another, who seemed to be an humble dependant, and who led the loveliest boy I ever beheld.—The pretty child soon caught Lucy's eyes, and attracted them in such a manner, that, after having mentioned him several times to *me* and miss Lewson with great admiration, she, at last spoke to him, and begged the favour of a kiss, which was granted with much seeming pride by her whom I supposed to be his mother; while the good-humoured little fellow threw his arms round Lucy's neck as she stooped down to him, and looked vastly pleased at being so caressed. He was indeed a striking figure. Lucy, after having distinguished him a good deal, while he was frequently brought near her, apparently to engage her attention, asked the woman who had the care of him, when she talked of carrying him home, whose child he was.

The woman replied, " Mr. Dashwood's."

That answer startled me, I confess, though it did not occasion any alteration in Lucy's features, who immediately said, " Is that your mama, my dear?" looking at the charming woman who kept at a distance, while she spoke to the child,

" Yes,"



"Yes," said the little boy.

That reply seemed to rise no suspicion in Lucy; but I was very differently affected by it.

When Mr. Dashwood came home in the evening, she told him what a sweet boy she had seen; adding that his name was Dashwood, and asking him, with the most innocent countenance, if he had any such relation.

He immediately answered in the negative, though I saw him change colour, and he instantly gave a turn to the conversation.—The boy is undoubtedly his, my dear; there never was a stronger likeness; a fine made little fellow about four or five years old, with just such sparkling and curling hair, and such a smiling mouth.—The blooming rogue was quite a rosy cherub: he wore a pea-green and silver hussar-dress, with a beaver-hat and feather.—In short, I thought Lucy would have devoured him, and was forced to call her off, and give her a hint that I fancied the woman he was with was not a proper acquaintance for *her*.

"What makes you fancy so, said she;—but one of them is excessively handsome."

"The more likely to be of a doubtful character," said I.

"Satirical Bab—replied my excellent sister, smiling on me—Well, let the women be what they will, the child is a perfect angel in every respect I am sure."

Now I do verily believe that this woman is one of Dashwood's former mistresses, and that the boy is *his child*—I said nothing to Lucy about my conjectures, but watched my sly brother, and observed

served him to look abashed.—He hung down his head all the evening.

I cannot help saying that though I shall extremely pity my sister, if my suspicions are well grounded, I shall delight in the humiliated appearance of one of the lord's of the creation, as they take so much pleasure in humbling us.—However, to do justice to Dashwood, he is apparently, and from her own confession, very fond of his wife, who well deserves his love; for she is the best of creatures.

“What a long letter, and not a word about Charbury?—that is, nothing to the purpose.”

Dashwood has had a letter from him.—He talks of leaving the Park, but not of coming to London.—Poor Constantia! I fear I may say also poor Bab!—Ash will fare the worse for this.—I cannot bring myself to use him tolerably. I have told him again and again that I will never have him.—Why won't the man believe me?

## L E T T E R XXVI.

The Honourable EDWARD DASHWOOD to Sir  
FRANCIS MOSTYN, Bart.

**I** Have received a very penitential letter from Die, in which she informed me of her being in a very bad state of health. I was therefore weak enough to go to see her; chiefly indeed I went on the poor child's account, whom I had snubbed merely for his good-nature to his mother.

I found

I found Die really very ill. My child, my Edward, flew to me with such delight painted in his innocent face, that I thought I should never be able to suffer him to leave my arms.—The insinuating mother then came, and with a supplicating look, while tears rolled from her fine eyes, asked me if I could possibly thus distress her by my cruel neglect.—I had appeared for some time quite indifferent to her.

I told her that my behaviour to her would depend entirely upon *her* discretion, of which I had not scarcely seen a single instance for a considerable time. In short, she humbled herself so much, and fell so thoroughly in with my humour, that I spent the the greatest part of the day with her: but I will own notwithstanding, that I never felt more sincere joy than when I returned to my Lucy, who has entirely gained my heart. Never was there a more lovely creature. Her person is sufficiently inviting to charm, without that enchanting softness of temper, which would conquer the most obstinate.

Charbury is, I find, not much less embarrassed than myself.—Between you and I he loves Bab, while Constantia dies for him: but I fancy his charity will get the better of his inclination.—I don't take Bab to be of a nature to fall a victim to a hopeless passion; but I would not answer for her lovely sister in such a situation. What care ought I to take of so dear, so gentle a girl. I will be attentive to her, I will be assiduous about her to the utmost of my power. I hardly ever go abroad without purchasing something for my Lucy, which  
will



will, I think, be agreeable to her, either for the decoration of her person or her apartments, though the former indeed wants nothing to render it more alluring.—However, I *must* procure her bracelets; those ornaments are extremely becoming on fine arms, and *her's* are remarkably beautiful.—I mentioned them the other day to her; she with a smile replied, that if I would sit for my picture she should esteem it round her arm infinitely more than the richest jewels I could possibly purchase for her.—You may be sure I complied with her request. Bab is to give *her* face to complete the pair.—I wonder that Die, with all her fondness for me, never thought of making me such a compliment.—But how can I imagine that she should think like my amiable wife?

## LETTER XXVII.

MISS GRAFTON TO MISS BLONDEL.

**L**ORD Charbury is returned.—Constantia was ready to expire with joy on his arrival. During his absence how many sighs were heaved, how many tears were shed!—how many times in a day did she cry, “When shall I see my dear guardian? I wish, miss Grafton, that he was here, or that you were with him.—What a variety of amusements would you have contrived for him. I am sure he misses your obliging care; and may be, his health may suffer for want of it.”

Her behaviour *now*, on my lord's return embarrasses me, and tries me exceedingly. How often

ten does she make me sigh!—how often does she make me weep!—how often does she make me blush!—I suppress my sighs, I conceal my tears, and hide my blushes in the best manner I am able. I have not indeed a very difficult task, for she has not a great deal of penetration, and is besides, entirely taken up with her guardian. But he is sufficiently penetrating; he hears, sees, and comprehends in a moment.—He looks pale and dispirited, and is by no means thoroughly recovered; yet the delicate languor which overspreads his face, gives new charms, *in my opinion*, to it.—Constancia burst into tears at the sight of him, while I dressed my deceitful face in smiles, when I welcomed him to town.—He endeavoured, I thought, to keep a greater distance than usual towards us both, but he cannot well keep it up towards *her*: her fondness breaks out every moment, and a man must be almost a Stoic, who can resist the advances of such a fine young creature, advances the most innocent, and therefore the most captivating. Well acquainted, however, as I am with the purity of her heart, I sometimes think that she discovers more fondness than is necessary for a man who has not made any declaration of love; and though she is quite a girl, and though he is, as she says, her guardian, yet as that guardian is a handsome young fellow, a little *retenüe* surely ought to be observed.—I should give her some admonition on this point, did I not feel something rising in my mind to check me: how indeed can I find fault with her for doing what I should do myself, were I not deterred by modesty.

—I do

—I do not, 'tis true, run to him, give him *my* hand, or take *his*, as *she* does, and look up in his face delighted; but I nevertheless discover my *esteem*—(there's a discreet word for you)—by proposing various kinds of remedies or amusements, in order to forward the recovery of his health, and to raise his spirits; and my proposals are received with a sort of awful respect, which is new and not unpleasing.—He was saying yesterday, that he believed he wanted exercise, and must go down to the Park again, as he found himself unusually indolent.—I caught up a racket immediately, which lay on the table, and asked him to play at shuttle-cock. He instantly complied, and we played till I, fearing to fatigue him after an illness which had so much lowered him, pretended weariness, and sat down. He threw himself into a chair, and looked at me in so particular a manner—I fancied so at least—and coloured excessively. He cast down his eyes directly, and taking a seat nearer me, pressed my hand in his; and while his eyes spoke, I thought, more intelligibly than his lips, said, “I am afraid, Miss Grafton, that you have, from your excessive good-nature and readiness to oblige me, fatigued yourself too much.—Would to h——n!—continued he, after a little pause—it were possible for me to to repay, only to attempt to repay the numberless favours I have received from you! But though I am cruelly denied that blessing, never will they be a single moment forgotten. Thoroughly sensible am I of your uncommon merit, though I am incapable of expressing my sentiments concerning it, yet my heart will ever be grateful.”

Bless



Bless me, Cecilia! was not this speech truly critical? I protest I was so touched by it, that I was almost ready to betray myself.—Luckily at that instant Constantia entered the room.

As he had risen from his seat, and walked from me, taking out his handkerchief, she ran hastily to him, and asked him if he was not well, and if she should fetch him any thing.—In short, she hung about him in such a manner, that he was really obliged to say something civil to her.

Forcing therefore a smile, he told her that nothing at all was the matter—*forcing* a smile, I say, because he certainly looked very much affected before. Fearing that I should discover improper emotions, I soon afterwards left them together.

When I came down again, I found him turning over the leaves of a book, as if he had taken it up merely for want of something to say.—Miss Lewson stood at a little distance from him, looking at him, as if she had been crying.

He laid down the volume as soon as I entered, and attempted to enter into conversation, though he seemed at a loss for words—extremely disconcerted indeed. Mr. Dashwood came in soon afterwards, and I went up stairs. Constantia followed me; and before I could ask her the cause of her unusual seriousness, told me lord Charbury had been saying so much in favour of lord Hillwood, that she was quite unhappy.—“I never thought—added she, bursting into tears—that my guardian would have wished to make me miserable; but lord Hillwood is the person to blame, who teazes him so about me.—I would not have such a man upon any account whatever.”

I had but just time to tell her that I was sure lord Charbury would not oblige her to any thing she did not like, when her maid Sally came and asked her if she would please to dress.—It was necessary for her to dress, in order to be ready for dinner.—It is as necessary for me now to lay down my pen.

### In Continuation.

WE all met at dinner. Lord Charbury was pensive and respectful; Constantia ready to cry. With a not much lighter heart than either of them had, I believe, I endeavoured to entertain them both.

While we were taking our coffee, lord Charbury informed us of his intention to return to the Park the next morning, and asked my sister if he should carry any message for us to Grafton-house.

Constantia changed colour, and seemed extremely restless: I fancied she wanted to be alone with him.—My sister expecting company I was following her into the drawing room, “Are you going to leave us, madam?—said he to me, with a constrained smile—will you not be so good as to stay and hear me promise Miss Lewson never to persuade her any more to receive Lord Hillwood, whose visits I had only encouraged in consequence of his repeated intreaties, and because I thought him a very amiable man.”

“It is not always in our power, my lord, replied I, to like the most deserving people.”

“No—answered he, with a half suppressed sigh—I see it is not: but as I have made this declaration

claration to miss Lewson before *you*, miss Grafton, she will, I hope, be quite easy, as I am not capable of breaking my word."

The servant that moment opening the door to let us know that my sister would be glad of our company, my lord bade us adieu.

Constantia ran to him just as he was leaving the room, and taking his hand, which she put to her lips, wetting it at the same time with her tears, and thanked him, in broken accents, for his consideration for her.

Any man who had felt the least inclination for her, any man of common gallantry; in short, any other man would have kissed her hand in return; but he did not even press it, and he looked, I thought more embarrassed than she did. Bowing respectfully to me, he left the room.

I am not able to know what to make of this behaviour; but it is not, I think, very favourable to poor Constantia.—As for me—I am out of the question.

## LETTER XXVIII.

From the same to the same.

**O**H, my Cecilia! all my hopes are for ever at an end. Constantia has been dying, actually dying for Lord Charbury. She was taken ill on the night he left us, and we were obliged in the morning to send for a physician. The company going away early, she complained of the headache, and retired to her own room: there she re-

[H 2]

mained



mained, not chusing to come down to supper. I went up to know what was the matter, though I guessed that she was only affected with my lord's departure.

I found her, as I expected, with her spirits violently agitated. When I urged her to acquaint me with the cause of her flutter, she replied, but with great reluctance, that her head was worse, and that she would go to bed.

After having proposed various remedies, but in vain, as she refused to take any thing, I left her with Sally. I even thought that she wanted me gone, though she seemed to be not in the least displeased with me. I called in again before I went to bed, and Sally told me that she believed she was asleep.—I fancied, indeed, I heard her sob, but imagined she only fretted about my lord's going away; I also imagined that she would be better by herself, as she might not chuse to let any body see how much she was distressed at his absence: desiring Sally, therefore, to call me if her lady was ill, I retired to my own apartment, though as little inclined to rest as Constantia was.

In the morning Sally tapped at my door, and begged to speak with me; I bade Molly let her in, and she told me that miss Lewson was much worse; in a high fever, she feared.

I rose immediately, and found her excessively disordered; quite delirious indeed, repeating lord Charbury's name, and calling upon him not to leave her, but to save her from the misery she was in.

Misery

“ Misery, my dear Constantia—said I—what afflicts you so much? We will send, and let my lord know how ill you are, as I dare say he is not yet got to Elm Park: but, in the meantime, you must tell me what makes you so very uneasy.”

“ Oh! replied she—he has left me for ever: I shall never see him again.”

I was startled, I confess, at this exclamation, though I looked upon her in the light of a lunatic, and told her to make herself composed; that I believed she was mistaken.—“ But supposing he is gone, my dear, added I, ’tis strange that you should imagine he will not see you again.”

“ Oh—no—no—cried she—he will never be any thing to me: another will have that dear heart, that charming person, and I—must die—with despair.”

I was, I own, extremely surprized at this speech.—I had no doubt with regard to the sentiments of the speaker; but I thought they were delivered with a calmness rarely to be met with in delirious people. I therefore began to suspect her of having feigned herself worse than she was, in order to discover her passion, which she would have been ashamed to reveal in any other way: but I wronged her; poor thing! she was not in her senses.

The physician declaring it to be his opinion that something lay upon her mind, advised us to send for lord Charbury.

Mr. Dashwood then—for I had informed both him and my sister of her condition, not chusing to do any thing about her of my own head—Mr.

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Dashwood then wrote a line to let him know that miss Lewson was dangerously ill, and that she had called upon him incessantly.

When the servant whom he had dispatched with his letter, arrived at Elm Park, he was informed that my lord had not been there for some time, and could not in two days procure any intelligence about his lordship.—My lord, indeed, went down to Windsor with the gentleman at whose house he supped, on the night Constantia was taken ill.

During our fruitless enquiries after him she came to her senses; but was weak, low, and dejected, and looked as if something very disagreeable lay on her mind, which she did not know how to reveal: and, without the removal of her uneasiness, nothing, the doctor declared, could be done. Our business, therefore, was to make her speak as freely when in her senses, as she had done when deprived of them.—This business I took upon myself, and she naturally enough turned the conversation upon the very subject on which I wanted her to enlarge, by asking if her guardian knew she was ill, and where he was.

After having suffered her to repeat her enquiries three or four times, I told her that I was sure Lord Charbury was the cause of her illness, though innocently so.—

“Is he not going to be married?” said she, colouring like scarlet; and, hiding her face with her handkerchief, would have been extremely glad to have retracted what she had said.

“Not to my knowledge, my dear—replied I—but why are you so uneasy about his marrying

rying? Have you any reason to imagine that he ever had any thoughts of marrying *you*?"

"Oh! no—no—cried she eagerly, and trembling all over—that's the thing"—

A deeper blush covered her face and neck.—Clasping her hands together, and bursting into tears, she exclaimed, "But what have I said?—He will now hate me—He will despise me—Oh! miss Grafton, pity me—and save me from his anger—save me, if you can, from what would be worse to me than his anger—his contempt."

"Is it possible, my dear—said I, pitying her excessively—for such a man as Charbury to hate you for loving him, to be angry with you for wishing to be *his*."

"No—but 'tis so indelicate for a girl to mention such an affair first, you know. Besides, if he is engaged—Oh! miss Grafton what will become of me? Indeed I almost wish I was dead."

"But why, my dear miss Lewson—answered I—should you fancy he is engaged? How came *that* into your head? And who is the lady?"

This last interrogation proceeded, I am afraid, as much from curiosity as compassion.

After a Number of sighs and tears, after a multitude of excuses, she confessed that she had loved lord Charbury ever since she had been under his care, and had strove as much as she could, modestly, to express her very great esteem and affection for him. "He has ever, indeed—continued she—treated me with the highest regard, but I have never discovered in him any signs of inclination for me; and he has proved his indifference too plainly by so earnestly persuading me to accept of lord Hillwood,



Hillwood, whom he encouraged to try to please me. By so doing he gave me so much uneasiness that it was not in my power to conceal it totally from my maid Sally, who, in return for a confidence improperly placed, abruptly told me that she supposed he wanted to see me settled first, as he was going to be married to a lady in the country, whose name she did not know; but she added, that she was sure of it, because my lord's man had communicated the news to her.—That news, and my lord's coldness together, have thrown my mind into so distracted a state, that I cannot possibly say when I shall be restored to the tranquility which I once enjoyed."

When I had heard her out, and it was some time before she had finished her *confession*, as she received interruptions from shame and grief, I begged her to compose herself, and promised to sound my lord about this marriage, of which, however, I did not believe a syllable.—Hardly had she earnestly conjured me not to expose her to him, when I heard of his arrival.

I had now, you will readily allow I fancy, a difficult part to play, especially as I was not less attached, I will honestly own, to lord Charbury than this poor young creature.—I determined to make him sufficiently sensible, to the utmost of my power, of her sufferings on *his* account, to make him desirous of relieving them. There was much delicacy as well as fortitude required in the management of such an affair. My first business was to arm her with proper resolution, that she might bring herself to bear the sight of him; for she fell into such a violent tremor as soon

as she heard he was below, that I was exceedingly alarmed for her.

When he entered the room, she held my hand so fast, intreating me not to leave her, that, though I had designed to slip away, I could not possibly do so at first. Fortunately for me, I am not, I dare say, suspected by her of having sentiments similar to her own.

At the entrance of his lordship, a smile of satisfaction rose in his face at the sight of me, and he made a little compliment for my care of miss Lewson.

When he advanced towards the bed-side, I quitted my chair, forcibly drawing my hand from Constantia to give him room to sit by her. —He seized both my hands, pressed them gently, and would have replaced me; but I hastily broke from him, and left the chamber.

In a short time he came down to the parlour in which I waited. —With a serious air I immediately asked him how he had found her.

“Very ill—said he—but I am greatly indebted to *you*, miss Grafton, for your exceeding kind attention to her; an attention—continued he, with a sigh—never to be repaid, I fear, either by her or by me.”

Summoning up at once all my fortitude, I replied, “By your affectionate attentions alone, my lord, can this poor girl be restored.—She loves you, my lord; loves you extremely; and the fear of not seeing you equally attached to *her*, strengthened by a report of your going to be married to a lady in the country, has  
thrown

thrown her into this melancholy situation, in which nothing but a return of tenderness equal to that she feels for you, will administer relief to her.—You cannot refuse *your* tenderness, I think, when you reflect upon the agreeableness of her person, the gentleness of her manners, and the virtues of her heart; to say nothing of what she endured before her delicacy would permit her to divulge the secret which I pressed her, most earnestly, to disclose.

Here I stopped, waiting to see what effect my speech had on him, as well as to relieve myself; for I really was so pained by my own feelings, and *felt* so deeply for the charming fellow to whom I had been speaking, that I was hardly in a condition to articulate another syllable.

Lifting up his hands and eyes, he said, softly, “What will become of me!” Then turning to *me*, with a sorrow painted in his countenance, which pierced my heart, “How, madam! is it possible that miss Lewson’s recovery can depend upon me?—or that my marriage could so much disquiet her?—But how came she to listen to such a falsehood?—I never yet addressed any woman”—(sighing).

“Make your first addresses then to this dear girl, my lord—said I, recovering my speech with an astonishing facility—You cannot be insensible to youth, beauty, and innocence, so sweetly combined; to a heart which is almost broke on *your* account, and which will make you happier than any other woman’s, because its gratitude will be equal to its love.”

“Charming



“Charming pleader!” I heard him say softly.—Those two words in the voice and manner they were delivered, affected me to a violent degree, having the greatest reason in the world to believe that if this poor love-sick girl had not come in his way, I should have stood a very fair chance to be particularly distinguished by him; and the impossibility—strong improbability at least—of my ever being *his*, drew tears from my eyes.—However, I resolved to continue my pleadings in miss Lewson’s favour with all the *powers* I was mistress of: yet I could not so far conquer my emotions, but that my lord perceived them.

I had thrown myself into a chair, and taken out my handkerchief to dry my eyes.

After having looked very attentively at me, he said, “How, madam! you weep.—Is miss Lewson then so dear to you as to occasion so much amiable concern? and shall I, whose duty it is to contribute to her happiness as far as I am able, shall I refuse? Shall my indifference bring tears from the finest eyes, sighs from the most valuable heart in the world?—No—dear miss Grafton—continued he, taking my hand between his—I cannot, believe me, I cannot deny *you* any thing.—I will be the husband of your young friend since *you* desire it.—But I must be—Oh! H—ns!—added he, checking himself, and turning from me—why, why am I not permitted to speak?”

Here a silence ensued for some time.—Both of us were, I believe, sufficiently agitated.

I, recovering first, thanked him in the strongest terms I could think of for his so tenderly compassionating

sionating Constantia's situation, and having begged him to accelerate the execution of his intentions on her account, hurried out of the room, not daring to trust myself a moment longer with him.—Shutting myself up in my chamber I gave a free vent to my tears, which a good deal relieved me.—Then washing my face, and endeavouring to divert my thoughts as much as possible from the object which engrossed them, by employing myself about twenty trifles, I ventured into Constantia's room.

I found my lord sitting by her bed-side, with her hand in his. I smiled upon him, to encourage him to go on; but I smiled like those people who sometimes put on pleasant looks, after having done something which they thought right, but in doing which they acted against inclination.

My lord told her what a valuable friend she possessed in me, and she declaring how much she esteemed me, they both sung my praises till I grew heartily sick of hearing them, as they were to no purpose. I therefore left them. My lord staid but a few minutes after me. He enquired, I was told, for Mr. Dashwood. Upon hearing that he was not within, he came into the parlour to me.—“I have obeyed your commands, madam—said he—I have done all that you required of me.—Be pleased to confirm my promise to your young friend to be *her's*.—I am obliged to go to Elm Park for a few days; when I return, I shall return hoping to find miss Lewson better.—A heart-felt sigh followed those words.—He then bowed respectfully, and left the room.

I looked

I looked after him, for he went out of the house immediately, till I could see him no longer.—When I went back to Constantia, she appeared to me as wild with her joy, as she had been before with her grief.—From what she told me about my lord, I found he had behaved very nobly, in declaring that he would do every thing in his power to make her happy.—But this declaration so unexpected and so pleasing, has put her into such a flutter, that she will not, I believe, be well in a great while.—I am very ill just at this moment—I must lay down my pen.

## L E T T E R   XXIX.

Lord CHARBURY to Mr. DASHWOOD.

**I** ENDEAVOURED to get a sight of you before you left London, but my attempts to see you were unsuccessful.—You have, doubtless, been informed of my proceeding with regard to Constantia; but you do not know, you cannot conceive what I suffered, before I could bring myself to make so considerable a sacrifice. I had, indeed, resolved before to offer myself to her; but the looks and behaviour of miss Grafton, charming beyond expression, on my returning to town, kept me wavering; especially as I hoped from lord Hillwood's continued attentions to miss Lewson, that he might in time bring her to listen to him.—In consequence of another letter which he sent to me, in which he earnestly intreated me to do every thing in my power to soften her in his favour, I again interceded for him with all the eloquence I



was master of, but in vain.—I was, I confess, so disconcerted by the behaviour of Constantia, that I determined to leave London, till I found myself more inclined to make an offer, on which I never thought but with the greatest uneasiness; and, to amuse my mind, accepted of an invitation, from an agreeable party, to go to Windsor.

At Windsor I received *your* letter, which informed me of Constantia's dangerous situation. I hastened to her. The first object that struck my eyes was the dear, lovely, enchanting Bab; she was sitting by the poor sick girl, and endeavouring to comfort her. I would have detained her in the room—not then knowing the cause of miss Lewson's disorder, who spoke of miss Grafton in the most affectionate terms.—By speaking of her in these terms, she gave me the highest opinion of the goodness of her heart, and at the same time made me but too sensible that had miss Lewson *not* been so much attached to me, I should never be able to make an impression upon miss Grafton, as her excessive fondness for a girl, who had evidently a particular regard for me, proved her to be entirely free from envy or jealousy, those common attendants upon a tender passion. My fears were confirmed immediately by miss Grafton's telling me, as soon as we were by ourselves, that Constantia's illness was occasioned by the report of my going to marry a lady in the country. When she had set her friend out in the most amiable light, she intreated me; yes, weeping, intreated me to make her happy.—Oh! Dashwood! you cannot conceive what I felt at so touching a sight—it melted my soul, but mortified me also in the highest degree.

I had

had once hoped that the charming creature would not have viewed me with so much indifference as to be able to plead so very warmly for her rival.—Yet who could refuse the adorable miss Grafton any thing? I yielded, therefore, I may say, more to oblige *her* than the almost expiring Constantia.—And I do not yet believe, in spite of all my resolves to make her mine, that I could have ever so far overcome my passion for Bab, had I not been so entirely convinced of her dislike to me as a lover. But though I never must dare to look upon her with the tenderness I wish to indulge, I felt a kind of melancholy satisfaction in yielding myself up a willing victim to her pleasure. The sacrifice, however, cost me so much that I could not bring myself to remain any longer upon the spot. I hurried down to this place to recover myself a little; but the sight of a place in which I have so often beheld, so often conversed with the too lovely miss Grafton, has caused numberless sighs to burst from my over-charged heart. Yet to what end do I complain!—I have promised to make a poor creature happy, whose *existence* almost depends upon *me*; and had she been indifferent to me, or had I resolved not to marry, Bab, I see plainly, would never have been mine.—She is, I believe firmly, my *friend*; but she reserves for some happier man, her *love*.—I was too presumptuous indeed in hoping for her love; but I must for ever regret my want of merit to deserve it.—Mr. Ash will, I fancy, at length make her sensible both of love and friendship.—May he really be as amiable as he appears to be, for *her* dear sake.

## L E T T E R    X X X .

Miss GRAFTON to Miss BLONDEL.

I Have not been well, my dear; and I have at this moment a disorder, which I never had before: they call it a nervous fever. Do you know that I don't like the name?—It is sufficient itself to lower my spirits.—Constantia, who is better, but by no means well, has expressed the greatest concern for me; and lord Charbury, who has been here these two days, discovers an anxiety about me, which would give me the highest pleasure, were he not destined to marry miss Lewson.

Ash is perpetually here: he has, somehow, contrived to ingratiate himself with Dashwood, who is, on a sudden, become his friend; I am therefore exposed to the tiresome repetition of his love and his solicitude.

How enchantingly does this amiable Charbury behave to Constantia, who is very weak and low!—She is ordered into the air, that her recovery may be completed; and in a few days we shall leave London.

My lord seems more eager for *my* going into the country than for miss Lewson's.—“You have hurt yourself—said he to me the other day—by too close an attendance on your young friend: let me intreat you to take more care of yourself.—I know that what I say, miss Grafton—added he, with a sigh—will have no weight with you; but for Ash's sake, who adores you, preserve a life so very valuable.”

I forced





Papa !”—Never—no never in my whole life was I so thunder-struck ; that voice, which used to be the sweetest of all voices to my ears, was then most unwelcome to them.—Shocked to death lest my wife should observe the little—what was I going to call him ?—Nothing surely was ever more innocent, more lovely.—But I say, alarmed beyond expression, lest she should take notice of the fond, the ill-timed appellation—I strove at first, by endeavouring to engage her attention to ward off the blow, which the malicious Die had levelled against my peace.—The poor boy, finding himself disregarded, or being spurred on by his diabolical mother, repeated the words, “ Papa !—papa !”—Then, enraged to a violent degree, I turned, and frowned at him in such a manner, that the poor little child trembled with fear, and ran away crying.

My wife, at that instant, looking behind her, said, Oh ! there is that sweet boy of whom I spoke to you, whose name they told me was Dashwood.—Do you know him ?”

“ His name is not Dashwood, I know,—that’s all, replied I, with a sharper tone than I had ever yet spoke to her.—But why do you take notice of such an insignificant child, when there are so many more agreeable objects to attract your attention.”

“ Indeed—replied she, blushing, and looking full of the most winning humility—I thought him the loveliest boy I had ever seen ; but if you don’t think him so, Mr. Dashwood”—continued she, casting down her sweet eyes, as if reproved by me—dear, dear girl, how I at that moment doated on her for admiring my own little Edward !—how severely

I con-

I condemned myself for having frightened the poor child away, and for having spoken so harshly to my wife!—The former I could not soothe at that time, though my heart yearned to do it; but I tenderly pressed the hand of the latter, by way of making her amends, and whispered softly, “I am glad my dearest girl is so fond of children; she will then, I hope, bear the unavoidable inconveniences with which they are sometimes accompanied, the better.—But come, we have lost our company, added I, taking her with me, in order to search for our friends, who were just before us, encompassed by the crowd—a crowd, however, which I dreaded to mix with, lest I might encounter Bellers, who could not be far off, I supposed.—In short, I was in a state of mind not to be described; I impatiently wished to be at home, but I dared not to discover any such inclination, fearing that the particularity of my conduct should render me suspected.—Had it not been for that apprehension, I would have gone instantly to Die’s lodgings, and waited her coming, that I might upbraid her for the insolence of her behaviour.—Yet I considered afterwards, that she possibly had not designedly occasioned what had happened, and that her appearance at Ranelagh that evening might have been quite accidental—(though she can’t hinder the child from knowing me, he might certainly be kept from running after me)—When I reflected too upon the joy which shone in my boy’s dear, innocent face at the sight of me, and on the eagerness with which his little feet hurried after me, I looked upon myself as a monster, for feeling the slightest dislike to him, and still more culpable for driving



from me a child so every way engaging, a child whom so many people would be transported to own.

As soon as breakfast was over the next morning, I flew to Die, almost breathless with anger—never was I so angry in my life—and asked her, when I could get out my words, what she meant by sending her boy to call after me at Ranelagh, only to expose me to my wife, and in public too.

“ I sent him to you on purpose—replied she, with a disdainful air—and if you imagine you were *exposed* by being known to be the father of so lovely a boy, you are unworthy of him—(rising with passion)—but know, Sir, I glory in being his mother, and cannot be better pleased than to have your wife know that he is *your's*.”

“ S'death—cried I, not being able to contain myself—what pleasure can you take in making a valuable and innocent woman uneasy, and yourself the talk of the whole town?”

“ Valuable—innocent—replied she, repeating those words with a sneer—I hate and detest her the more for being thought so by *you*.—I hate her worse than death itself; I envy her too the possession of the only man I ever loved; I could tear her in a thousand pieces (stamping)—And as to my character—added she, bursting into tears—it was gone, lost, for ever lost, before I knew you—I am of no value—I have no innocence to boast of—and therefore you scorn me, you despise me.”

Here her tears streamed fast, and her voice was melted to such a degree, doubtless by the reflections which arose in her on her past life—(perhaps too she thought that but for *me* she might have been in a  
more

more respectable situation)—that I went and sat down by her, and taking her hand in mine, said, “Indeed you wrong me; I never despised you, and would you but keep within the bounds of discretion, you should have no reason to complain of me.”

“Did I not behave with discretion—interrupted she eagerly—till you left me to marry this woman, this devil, I believe, who has bewitched you from me?”

“Now—replied I—you are flying out again.—You well know that I married her entirely in obedience to the positive commands of my father, that I might retrieve my affairs.—I had not even seen my wife when I consented.—You, therefore, wrong me by accusing me of a desire to leave you.—I never wished to desert you; nor should I ever have taken a wife, had I not been forced into matrimony even to provide for you; and certainly as I *am* married to a woman every way amiable, the least I can do is to preserve some decency, and not to give her any reason to suspect me—not to give her any uneasiness.”

“Aye—now I see what has put you into such a passion with me—replied she—you actually love this creature: she has somehow wheedled you to be fond of her; for I am sure there is nothing in her person, which is, to the last degree, contemptible—But men—O what deceitful villains they are!—they will leave the most perfect beauty—(leering at herself in the glass)—for the most frightful, disagreeable creature that nature ever formed, for variety: could I new-make myself, though I changed for the worse, I might hope to be as well loved as that seducing ugly devil is.”

“I shall

“ I shall not stay to hear such undeserved epithets bestowed upon *my* wife—said I—therefore if you expect ever to see me again, you must alter your style.”

“ You may do as you please, Dashwood—replied she—but I swear then you shall never see your child more.—Come away, Sir, this moment—for the boy stood between my knees.—I had been trying to make him amends by my caresses, for the harsh looks I gave him the evening before, poor dear fellow !

I suffered him to obey his mother, and then rose up to go.—She had no mind, I perceived, to part with me.—The child drew back from me with lingering steps, staring at us both.—What an improper scene to be exhibited even before such an infant !

Just as I got to the door, she came after me, and with her eyes almost blinded with her tears, said, “ Stay, Dashwood ; can you so easily resolve to give up both me and your poor little Ned, your own sweet picture, far more like you than that which your *wife* wears on her arm—I know all, you see—though you, like a dissembling villain, endeavoured to conceal it from me—(sobbing behind her handkerchief)—I am sure *I* was never blest enough to have your picture, and now I am to be for ever deprived of the original.—Oh ! what misery am I destined to endure !—I cannot support it—but death is preferable to life in such a situation.”—

Here she would have fallen on the floor, had I not held her up, and carried her to a sofa, on which she soon recovered from her fainting ; but  
declared



declared that if I was absolutely determined to see her no more, she would put an end to her existence that moment: talking, by fits, in so incoherent, so distracted a manner, that I really began to be apprehensive of her offering violence to herself; and not caring to have *her* murder added to my other sins, I strove to quiet her; to make her calm; to make her reasonable.

Looking at me with a tender languishment in her fine eyes, and throwing her arm on my shoulder—“Oh, Dashwood!—said she—if you knew the torment I suffer you would pity me, in spite of all which this cursed woman does to ruin me.”

“Again?—said I—Have I not just told you that I will not hear my wife mentioned in such language?”

“Don’t distract me—cried she, rising, and walking from me—for by H——n if you do, I will not answer for myself. I will destroy you—your hated wife—my child—myself, and all the world.”—(tearing her handkerchief)—

I again made towards the door.—Ned ran after me.—She then cried, “Ay, go, go, and try if you can soften your inhuman father.”

“I do not deserve that epithet—said I—nor will I ever deserve it—if you will but behave like a rational being.”

“What must I do?” replied she, weeping afresh.—Then sinking suddenly down at my feet, she grasped my knees, saying, “Oh! Dashwood, do not, do not abandon me quite; I cannot bear it.—Oh! turn and tell me that you forgive me, and I will be calm—indeed I will.”

Who

Who can resist a weeping, kneeling beauty?—I raised her tenderly from the floor, pressed her once more to my bosom, and told her if she would promise to keep herself more retired, that I would see her as usual, and that she should have no reason to complain of me.

“ And will you be so good, after all—said she, reclining her head on my shoulder—and will you let me have such a bracelet with your dear picture ?”

I hesitated a little at the last clause in this treaty of peace. I should not have minded giving her my picture before; but as I am married, and as my Lucy has one, I think I should make *some* distinction between my wife and my mistress. Nothing else, however, would do.—To render her tolerably easy, therefore, I promised her a miniature of me; but I am resolved to have it much too large for her arm.—Would to H——n! I had never seen her!

## L E T T E R XXXII.

Miss GRAFTON to Miss BLONDEL.

Grafton-House.

**I** AM come down to this place with Constantia for the air.—She is still but in a very low way. As soon as she is recovered, the ceremony is to be performed. If any thing can restore her, surely it must be the continual attention of such a man to make her happy; though I cannot but see that he is very much otherwise himself. I never, I confess, thought him greatly in love with miss Lewson till  
now;

now ; and now I begin to give up my penetration ; for I declare he seems perfectly attached to her : and the hurry he is in to make her lady Charbury, puts the matter, in *my* opinion, out of dispute.—But why then does he still sigh ? Why sit with folded arms, and spend hours and hours away when he might be with her ?—Possibly, indeed, the slowness of her recovery, contrary to his wishes, may be the cause of his dejection.—Perhaps he may have several affairs to settle before his marriage, which require his presence at home : yet, I think, he need not be under any apprehension about her health ; the ease which he has given to her mind will, in all probability, co-operating with her youth, soon restore it.—I may add too his extreme assiduity ; for though he does not spend a great deal of time in her company, he is good-natured and obliging to her, in the highest degree, whenever he is with her, and is uncommonly tender in his whole behaviour. He flies to give her her cloak when she is going into the garden ; offers his arm to support her ; makes her sit down when she has walked but a little way, lest she should be fatigued ; and if there is no back to the garden-seat, which is sometimes the case, obliges her to lean upon him to rest her ; and when he goes out to take an airing with her, lifts her in and out of the coach. He must certainly make the tenderest of all husbands.—*She* is fond of him to extravagance, repays all his affectionate assiduities by the most grateful endeavours to please.—Yet, notwithstanding all this, there is something in *his* behaviour which I cannot define, nor indeed comprehend. He is indisputably more the guardian, the friend of Constan-

tia,



tia, than her lover. How different is Ash, who has hurried down hither after us?—My father, tho' I have declared I cannot love him, permits him to be for ever here. If I see right, my father is not pleased with the approaching marriage of my young friend, yet knows not how to be angry with me just now, because he would have me in humour with Ash.—I have some notion that my father hoped I had made a conquest instead of Constantia. You know how Sir Robert respects rank, next to that of fortune, while poor merit—Yet hold—don't let me go too far.—Ash is certainly a deserving man, though I cannot reward him for being so.

In Continuation.

Since I wrote the above, we have been so perpetually engaged, that I have had no time to come to a conclusion.—Constantia is better, and Tuesday next is the day fixed for the marriage at the church near Elm Park, to which place we shall adjourn till dinner-time, and leave miss Lewson the happiest of women; the happiest wife of the most amiable of men.—I cannot write any more at present, having got a violent pain in my head, and Ash is so troublesome with his remedies.—